

*This statement conveys a genuine sense that the student has faced and overcome challenges: the story told here seems authentic, in part, because the writer reflects deeply upon how it has changed her. It is also slightly critical of an older self, of a way of looking at the world she has since abandoned. The writer is making a trade-off: by focusing on one formative experience, she neglects other stories about her preparedness. But this approach—focusing on the shaping power of a single experience—is typically stronger than turning the statement into a kind of résumé of achievements.*

During every UConn break I looked forward to being a teacher's assistant for my mentor, Catherine, in her classroom at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, Connecticut. The first day I walked through the doors of that school I expected to spend a day in the classroom working with students able to have stimulating conversation and easy to collaborate with, but quickly this perfect picture I had was shattered. As I entered her classroom I was shocked to see how different the environment was from my predominantly white, suburban high school in Wallingford, Connecticut. Students were listening to their iPods, promoting candy sales, and speaking in languages foreign to me. Class began and students took out Spanish-English dictionaries, Catherine wrote words in Spanish as well as English on the board and students conversed with each other in their native languages discussing the assignment. I went home that day completely shaken, confused and almost scared to return.

The next day I resignedly drove back to Wilbur Cross, dreading the classroom of B201. As we were talking about The Great Gatsby one student, Maria, asked me "Miss, what does morally corrupt mean?" I was forced to pick up a dictionary in order to communicate with her, as well as the other students who asked for help. I started immersing myself in their culture and found myself feeling incredibly rewarded when they understood what I was explaining. On each school break, I continually visited Wilbur Cross and formed relationships with these students talking in hybrids of Spanish, English and Portuguese, which taught me language was a barrier that could be overcome with patience and diligence. I was able to see beyond the commotion of

the classroom and seemingly unstructured teaching methods to realize it was necessary to adopt a different teaching style than I was exposed to all my life. I was put outside my comfort zone, but working with these students opened my eyes to see life everywhere was not as I had experienced in Wallingford.

After graduating from the NEAG School of Education for secondary English education I want to be back in a classroom like B201. I learned from that classroom the prejudices that many people have about culturally and linguistically diverse students are not true. One of the students, Juan, asked me “Miss, how do I find out if colleges will accept my ECE classes?”. Principal Perry of Capital Preparatory school in Hartford and I know these students take the upper level courses and have aspirations of college, but it often goes unnoticed. This experience has shown me that students who live with language barriers or difficult home situations do not choose to struggle in school. Those are factors that may inhibit them academically, but with compassionate teaching, high expectations and determination I know diverse students can succeed. Without one doubt in my mind these students deserve a good education as much as any other student in the public education system and it is my responsibility as a teacher to see they are given such in my classroom.

When I am standing in front of my own diverse classroom I hope the IB/M program will have provided me with the skills to teach multicultural learners. I want to take courses specializing in teaching English language learners and am interested in becoming certified in this area. Through student teaching, internships and volunteering I want to learn various teaching methods that will lead to being a successful educator. I hope by student teaching in urban schools I will have the opportunity to learn more about multicultural education through hands on experience. I feel having an open mind is a key component while teaching in a diverse classroom

because believing every student should have the same educational opportunities will help create a successful learning environment. Through preparation through the NEAG School of Education I want to feel comfortable teaching a classroom of multicultural learners and know I can communicate with my students, gain respect and achieve objectives I have set.