



What is your name and where are you from?

Dylan S. Tacoma, WA

What are you proud of so far this school year? I have a Kindergarten student who started the school year off with significant difficulty being away from home. I regularly met with his teacher to attempt to problem solve behavioral challenges. There was a point where, after having to be escorted by me and his classroom teacher to do the work, shortly after she left the office, he turned the lights off and ran out into the school. I had to run after him and take him back to class. After more problem solving meetings with his teacher, and her having meetings with his mom, he's finally having significantly better days at school. Now, when I come to pull him from class, he's excited and skips towards me.

When I first tested him, he was so distraught, he wouldn't say a single letter sound. Now, he's proud to demonstrate the letter sounds he knows. I look forward to continuing to see him progress as a student.

What's a positive about serving elementary and Pre-K kids during a pandemic? Being able to provide a small sense of normalcy to students during a time of uncertainty is, in my opinion, one of the most important aspects of serving elementary youth during a pandemic. Consistency and routine are paramount to early learning, and those are hard to come by these days. Transitions are challenging for many children, and many of our daily routines have changed in unprecedented ways. Being part of a consistently supportive foundation is a tremendous positive.

Describe a moment during your service that touched you. At the beginning of my first service year, it was hard for me to gauge whether or not I was having an impact on my students. Progress is slow to start, and I felt like I wasn't making the difference I wanted to be making. Just before fall break, I asked a student if she was excited for her long weekend, to which she replied, "yes and no." I asked her why not, and she told me that she was going to miss me. At that moment, I understood that spending even twenty minutes a day with these students was having a bigger impact that I could even imagine. Twenty minutes may seem like a short time to an adult, but to a child, it can seem much longer. Literacy skills can be built twenty minutes at a time. Relationships and confidence can be built, twenty minutes at a time.

Who or what is inspiring you during your service term? Through this pandemic, I have seen nothing short of heroic amounts of dedication by educators to ensure that students are being served. Navigating a system in upheaval is no easy feat, and teachers all around me are doing it while walking into their classrooms with smiles, and pouring their hearts into their work. It is a labor of love, and it is inspiring.