



What is your name and where are you from?

Sophia. I am from New York (middle school), Chicago (High School), Alaska (College), Colorado (permanent home as of one year ago).

Describe a moment during your service that touched you.

I was not able to student teach due to financial restraints and had to change my major from Secondary Education to Professional Writing. Serving at AmeriCorps [Corps for a Change] has given me the opportunity to work with students in ways I had hoped to support them as their teacher. While talking with a student who was worried that he might set goals only

to work toward it and then change his mind, I tried to ease his concerns by explaining that working toward a goal that doesn't pan out, doesn't mean that time was wasted. As a frame of reference I shared that my education classes helped me prepare for serving AmeriCorps even though I hadn't become a teacher and the student responded with "I wish you were my teacher." He said it just like that without any hesitation and I have never been so touched and heartbroken at the same time.

What is a strategy you use to improve relationships with your high school students?

With the students I am serving I really try to focus on cultivating self-motivation. I believe that if a student can see a clear path from school engagement to the future they want for themselves then they won't need me next year. I start by simply asking the student, "what will you be doing after high school?" Then, whether they have an answer or not, I ask them to take a career aptitude test. We discuss the results with an air of excitement and then we make a game plan. The most important strategy here is that it is all about them. What do they like, what do they want, what do they need. The final step is creating a portfolio for them with a progress bar. I'm trying to make it fun with bright colors, pictures, and memes. Every month I'll be sending the student their updated portfolio and they can literally see their own progress, which in turn motivates them to do more for themselves.

What's a positive about serving high school students during a pandemic?

High school is a point where students feel like there isn't enough opportunity for them to explore all their options for their future. It can feel hopeless, overwhelming, and foster lethargy all at once. With shorter school days and working from home, all high school students need to contemplate electives, look at trade school options, apply for college scholarships, and try their hand in a field through community service, is a little guidance and support. If we were in school there would be this feeling of not having any time between all day in classes, then extracurricular activities, then homework and a part time job. Now these students have a chance to stop, breathe and really explore all their dreams and aspirations. In turn, having a window into that future provides motivation to attend online class and do more than just pass.