

Professional Goals Statement

Reflecting on my more than three years in the University of Virginia Education Specialist degree program, I appreciate how the program has provided me with the tools and resources to achieve a more balanced, nuanced, and informed understanding of the field of educational linguistics. Prior to my graduate education studies, my previous coursework focused on the field from the perspectives of theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, and translation theory and practice. As I advanced through each course in the Ed.S. program, I was exposed to content which I had studied before (such as English linguistics, second language acquisition, and language teaching methodologies) but from the lens of education theory, practice, and research. This interdisciplinary approach to the field of educational linguistics and English as a Second Language has broadened my understanding of the field's fundamental principles by bringing into clearer focus the practical impacts of research and how it can be effectively applied in the classroom. My overall takeaway from the program is that, compared to the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics, the field of education is generally more practically oriented with a clearer focus on identifying and solving real-world problems. The program has also given me the freedom to engage with topics I had never studied before, such as cultural geography and cross-cultural education, which has added new depth and detail to my professional toolkit.

I believe that educators should use their positions of power to effect positive societal change and achieve greater social justice in their personal and professional realms (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). Whether educators work in public or private instructional settings, their privileged status endows them with the ability to leave a significant positive impact on the world around them. This is especially true for educators whose work involves multilingual learners, who contribute so much to the fabric of our nation yet sometimes struggle due to deeply imbedded institutionalized systems and structures that marginalize them, their families, and their communities. Part of my own personal and professional growth has included developing a deeper understanding of the socially transformative role of educators and their moral responsibility to exercise their power for the benefit of their students and society at large.

In my current role as a leader at my educational institution, I endeavor to inspire others to achieve excellence and equity in the field of English language teaching and administration by committing myself to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, so that my actions might motivate others to strive for their own excellence and continuous self-improvement. Because I believe that learning is a lifelong venture that should be understood as a journey rather than a destination, I will continue my education both formally and informally while encouraging those around me to continue their education in whatever ways they can. Recognizing that we are all long-term language learners (Kibler & Valdés, 2016), I will devote myself to the ongoing study of language and languages. In order to acquire greater empathy for the language learners I serve and to enhance my ability to meet their needs, I will try to place myself in their shoes by experiencing the joys and challenges of learning another language. By positioning myself as a novice language learner, I can acquire a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the student experiences relevant to my professional work. I will urge my colleagues to share this view and aid their efforts to embark on their own language learning journeys.

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I will further the project to reframe how culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) are understood in the field of teaching English as a second language to encompass not only those who are instructed but also, critically, the object of instruction itself. By vigorously opposing raciolinguistic beliefs that suppress regional and vernacular varieties of English in favor of the so-called “standard” (Flores & Rosa, 2015) and calling on others to join this cause, I can help to confront, challenge, and eventually overthrow hegemonic language ideologies that continue to inflict harm on the communities that speak varieties of English other than the so-called “standard.” I will help others in the field come to understand that English learners will achieve more effective and authentic interactional competence in the language when they are taught to value the speech of all who speak the language, regardless of which variety of English they may use at home or in their community.

Finally, I will actively encourage and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of English language teaching, especially among its teaching and administrative ranks. I acknowledge that, as a manager charged with hiring and supervising faculty and staff, I have a vital role to play in ensuring that teachers and administrators reflect the diversity of their students and society more broadly. I will do all within my power to address, problematize and ultimately undo “the acute underrepresentation of Black teachers in the field and the limited focus on the Black experience in TESOL research” (Nabukeera, 2022, p. 2), which is essential for achieving the full measure of social justice we seek in our field. I will remain undaunted as I strive toward achieving these professional goals with the knowledge that my work has a tangible impact on the stakeholders I serve.

References

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