

Through my lived experiences as a first-generation Mexicana college student and my numerous leadership experiences in the community, I have realized that I'd like to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching, an Elementary Education Licensure, and a bilingual authorization to serve as a mentor for students. I'd like to give back to my comunidad Latina, which nurtured and empowered me. If it weren't for the impactful teachers I had in K-12, I wouldn't have chosen a career in education.

Spanish is my first language, and in middle school, I was able to take my first Spanish class. I loved it. This class felt like something that was missing in my school day. Since the Spanish I knew was the one I grew up speaking at home, I became interested in reinforcing my reading and writing skills. Spanish class was my favorite class of the day, and it came naturally to me. In high school, I then took two years of Spanish for Heritage Speakers and two years of AP Spanish classes. Spanish was my favorite subject and my favorite class, so I decided to pursue it as part of my undergraduate career. I intended to become a Spanish high school teacher, but when I decided to pursue research as a Ronald E. McNair Scholar, I became interested in bilingualism, ethnic identity, and bilingual education. My current capstone project focuses on the case studies of two bilingual individuals who grew up on the central coast of California: one who experienced bilingual education from childhood and the other who took Spanish as a heritage language in high school. I am excited to learn more about the impacts of bilingual education on these two individuals, but also to become a bilingual teacher myself and impact the lives of my future students.

As a future bilingual teacher, I look forward to positively impacting my student's educational journey and teaching them to love and embrace their biliteracy. As an elementary school student, I didn't have the opportunity for my Spanish and English-speaking abilities to coexist, so as a future teacher, I'd like to develop a welcoming environment for my future students. I remember feeling discouraged to speak Spanish in the classroom in second grade. Although my teacher spoke Spanish, I did not understand why it was English time and I could not speak Spanish. Bilingual education in California—eliminated as an outcome of Proposition 227 in 1998—resulted in many Spanish-speaking ethnic minorities being torn away from a chance to preserve their native language.¹ Three years before I was born, Proposition 227 passed, robbing me of the opportunity to access bilingual education. Now that Proposition 227 has been overturned by Proposition 58, I intend to become a part of the representation for students. I believe that in California, we should count on bilingual education from K-16. Granting bilingual students the opportunity to learn in their native language as well as reinforce their ethnic identity. As a result of my Spanish classes, and my ability to speak Spanish, it has strengthened my Mexicanidad. I will become a part of the growing 21% of Hispanic, or Latino certified teachers.² I look forward to empowering my students to feel proud of speaking Spanish. My students and I will all come together as a class and *platicar* about how amazing we all are as individuals, cultivating a sense of love and respect for each other.³

All in all, my short-term goal is to pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching plus licensure and bilingual authorization to teach in a K-6 setting to support bilingual initiatives. Furthermore, my long-term goal is to pursue a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction to implement progressive bilingual education programs that promote native Spanish-speaking preservation. I look forward to giving back to my comunidad Latina and all the multilingual communities of California.

¹ [California proposition 227, require English instruction in Public Schools Initiative \(June 1998\). Ballotpedia. \(n.d.\). Retrieved February 7, 2022.](#)

² [Dataquest. DataQuest - Accessing Educational Data \(CA Dept of Education\). \(2019\). Retrieved December 13, 2022.](#)

³ Fierros, C. O., & Bernal, D. D. (2016). VAMOS A PLATICAR: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 15(2), 98–121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43941617>