

Supporting Volunteers

I have a volunteer who is in her forties and has returned to school to earn her Master's in Teaching. She wants to be a high school teacher and doesn't speak any Spanish, nor has she had any exposure to English Language Learners or the Latino community. I helped place her in two different schools to work in classrooms serving migrant students. She encountered about every type of problem you could imagine. Students not showing up, teachers not knowing what to do with her, teachers angry she didn't speak Spanish, miscommunications in class schedules, among other issues. As a volunteer coordinator, it was my worst nightmare, as my main goal is to ensure all of those things don't happen and that the volunteer, students, and teachers have mutually beneficial experiences. She called and I immediately apologized for all of the confusion. She stopped me and said, "I called to thank you for all your hard work connecting me with these opportunities. It has affirmed my desire to become a high school teacher." She said she wants to continue volunteering and she can't wait to have her own classroom someday and now she has a particular interest and perspective into barriers facing English Language Learners and Migrant Students. This made me very happy. I know when volunteers connect with these students it will change their perspectives. Our students have so much to offer our community and it is devastating they are largely seen as a burden. When someone transforms their perspective based on their volunteer experience I feel very, very grateful.