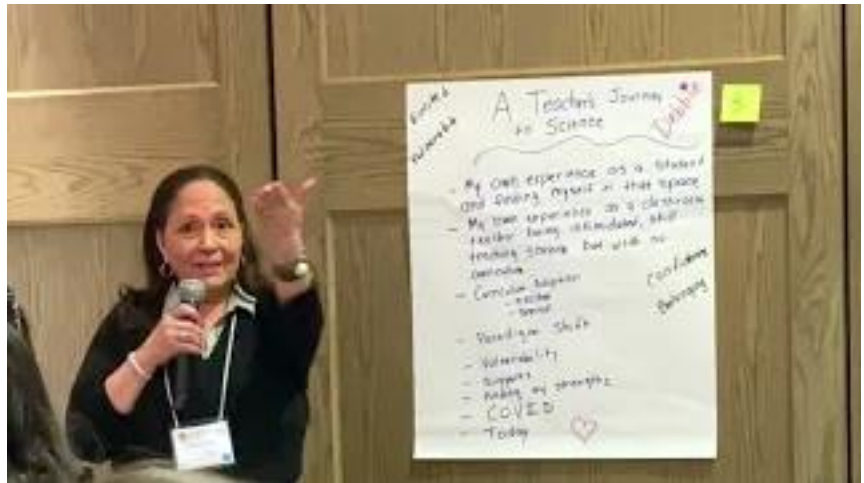


A Teacher's Journey to Science

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I work for Seattle Public Schools and have been in education for over 25 years. Most of my teaching career has been in kindergarten. As an early childhood educator, I have learned along the way what works for students at that developmental age.

In 2019, Seattle Public Schools adopted the Amplify curriculum. The science department decided to partner up with UW to be able to support teachers on a larger scale in implementing the newly adopted curriculum. The adoption was implemented in stages and cohorts.



The first cohort was schools that volunteered to be part of the launch. Once the schools were identified, teachers were recruited to volunteer to be part of the initial launch.

On a personal note, I have found science to be intimidating. This came to be because, as a student, I never saw myself in that space. I was not given opportunities to explore being in the science world. I faced two negatives: I was female and Hispanic.

“ True resistance begins with people confronting pain... and wanting to do something to change it.
—Bell Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Hooks, 2014). ”

As a classroom teacher, I knew how important it was for me to make sure that my students were given the opportunity to explore science, even if I was not given a curriculum. I consider myself a confident teacher who strives to look for new strategies to help my students learn.

When Amplify was introduced at an introduction meeting, I was excited and scared at the same time. I was excited because I was finally getting a curriculum that was developed with high-quality materials and content. I was scared because I did not know if I had it in me to be vulnerable and ask for support. Before the meeting ended, we were asked to choose whether to commit to the initial role. This meant that I would have to have people come into my classroom and see me at my most vulnerable time as a teacher.

I was assigned to an SPS Science Curriculum specialist and a University of Washington researcher. At first, when I started my science lessons, I was provided PPT slides to teach my lessons. On my first day after

preparing for my lesson, I opened the PowerPoint and started teaching. I quickly realized I had made a mistake. The PowerPoint was for me to adjust the lesson for my students. As an early childhood educator, I should have known that PPTs that last 30 minutes are not the best practice for a kindergarten student. So, the next time I taught, I decided only to keep the pictures and videos and create an outline on the board to guide me as I taught. That's when I realized that I already had strategies to rely on. Now I just need to work on the content. I also realized that my students came with their own funds and knowledge, and together we could start making some sense as we went through the unit's phenomenon.

At first, I was somewhat apprehensive and worried that my shift in strategy had changed. When I did express my findings, I was met with support. I then realized that we were all learning from each other. My support system was made up of experts in teaching science, and I had expertise in how to better support early learners. We met many times, and I looked forward to the observation visits because I knew I was growing and feeling comfortable with the newly adopted curriculum. We consulted about strategies for teaching science and how to create space for students to do the sense-making.

After completing my first unit, COVID hit, and my biggest worry was that all the hard work would be wasted because now we had bigger challenges. How were my students going to continue their science journey? Now, not only did I have the science challenge, but I was also faced with using technology and teaching through TEAMS.

The first thing I did was create a schedule. It was important to me that my students had a routine. The students were very aware of when things were going to happen. They especially knew they were having science at 1:00 on the scheduled dates. They loved their science time, and I did too.

One day the science department approached me because they needed someone to volunteer to record the lessons for the third unit in kindergarten, ensuring that all students in SPS and their families would have access to these lessons. Knowing how important it was for students to access science, I took on the challenge.

By the end of the following school year, I was contacted by the science department, who informed me that a position was becoming available and that they were interested in me applying for a position as a science curriculum specialist. I could not believe that they wanted me for that position.

Today, I can proudly say that I am a science curriculum specialist, and I do belong in that space. I work with a team that is supportive and has welcomed me with open arms. They value my contributions and respect the professional that I am.



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