

A Leadership Experience

In my view, a leader unites a group towards a better direction, A leader can achieve this by positively motivating group members, resolving differences within the group, and directing group efforts. I had the opportunity to lead others during my time as a teacher assistant for math.

As a teacher assistant, I provide additional support for students who struggle with math. I would clarify the problems in a way they could understand better. Sometimes students in a group have disagreements regarding the answer to a question. I would understand their disagreements and calm them down. Then guide them to understand each other's perspectives or mistakes in order to direct them back to the right track. Finally, check their works.

When working with students who disagree with one another, I learn that it might be difficult to see our own mistakes. Therefore, it is important to keep an open mind about our perspectives and be encouraging as a leader. Because everyone has their own strength and weaknesses, I constantly encourage students to help others that tend to struggle more. For example, one student, who I taught had difficulty understanding how to solve for singular variables. She was afraid to ask others for help, but when I asked other students, I realized others had a similar problem. Together, we evaluate our understandings and see new perspective in our existing knowledge.

In addition, I learn that a leader should not be content with her own achievements and stop learning. Occasionally, I get confused by my students' questions. However, it allows me to see areas where I need to improve on. I believe a good leader would be humble to acknowledge his or her own faults and continuously look for self-improvements.

As a teacher assistant, I have been able to use my problem-solving and communication skills effectively. Over time, my students begin to understand and solve math problems better than when I first started as their teacher assistant. Simultaneously, I see my own advancement as a leader in the class. I am proud of both my “students” and my enhancement.

The Most Significant Challenge

One of the most significant challenge I have faced is stepping out of my comfort zone. I was born and raised in Hong Kong before immigrating to the United States at the age of 16. Being in an unfamiliar environment is always difficult as there are many obstacles to overcome. However, stepping out of my comfort zone has been one of my most rewarding experience.

For example, I typically share ideas and communicate in Chinese, but I had to adapt to a completely different language when I moved to the United States. Even though it was difficult, I saw it as an amazing opportunity to improve myself and learn to be well-versed in English. I took many steps to improve my English skills. During English class, after reading novels recommended by my teacher, I shared my thoughts with my classmates and asked for feedback. I used online resources to improve my vocabulary. Additionally, I volunteered to read in front of the class in order to improve my public speaking skills.

Another difficulty in adapting to a new environment was to build a new social group. The people I met in the United States are different culturally from my social circle in Hong Kong. I felt difficulty blending in at first, but I learned that even with different culture, by being genuine, proactive, and friendly, cultural differences is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, I felt that as my English improved, my classmates also understood my personality better and were interested in becoming friends. I think a supportive social group is essential to my adaption to a new environment, and I am very grateful to have met my new friends.

Stepping out of my comfort zone and adapting to a brand new environment are overwhelming challenges for me. However, I understand that changes and challenges happen

in every stage of our lives, and that is what makes life fascinating and beautiful. I am appreciative of an early opportunity to challenge myself as now I learn that I have the resilience and determination to embrace any challenges ahead.

My Favorite Academic Subject

Math is my favorite academic subject, and I perform quite well in it. However, math was not always a subject I excelled in. When I was in elementary school, I struggled with understanding how to solve equations and multiply. I even performed below average in the class, and that made me less confident.

However, I realized that I had to be proactive and change my mentality in order to improve math skills. I started to pay closer attention at school and sought assistance from math tutors. That was when I met my best mentor, Alan Chan who opened my eyes in math. He interpreted math problems explicitly and demonstrated his way of problem-solving, so that I could understand the logic more effectively. He liked to select students randomly to answer his challenging questions, and I was amongst one of the few he consistently selected. After attempting to solve some really challenging questions, I still remember his comments vividly, "Man Ting has potentials".

Because of his encouragement, I became much more confident with math. Through his patience and guidance, I improved tremendously from a struggling student to a star student in math. As I understood the logic in math more and more easily, I also became fascinated with math and how I can apply it to our daily lives such as grocery shopping. Furthermore, I become a math assistant this year, and I can use my math skills to teach students.

My experience has proved that if we invest hard work, a weakness can become a strength one day. I trust that I will not be overwhelmed by any difficulties in the future remembering that I am proficient in which I once struggled heavily.

Make Community A Better Place

This fall, I volunteered in the presidential election as a poll worker. I learned the importance of empathy after working as a poll worker. My responsibilities were to check people's names in the roster and to give them ballots. My teammates assisted regular voters in putting their ballots into the insight machine. There was an instance where I could not handle a unique condition, and that was when the voice-by-mail voter forgot to bring their envelope, and they still wanted to vote at the polling place. I did not know what should I do, but my teammates guided me to solve the problem. Without their help, I would not be able to finish up my tasks. Even though I made mistakes, they always encouraged me and taught me about how to do better next time. I believed my teammates were helpful and supportive because they could empathize me. They all had their first experience and mistakes, and this experience had since been quite inspiring to me. For one, even though my tasks seemed mundane at times, by working together, we achieved something magnificent - the realization of democracy.

Therefore, after this experience, I learned that no matter how small a task is, it will make a difference in our community and that was when I started looking for opportunities to contribute. I volunteered at a private school, Huada Chinese Academy which provides equal access to Chinese education to anyone who is interested in learning Chinese. Therefore, my mission was to extend empathy and to give my students the support they need to learn Chinese. As an immigrant to the United States, I can relate to the difficulties in learning a new language. I would like to share my experience in adapting to a new language to ensure my students enjoy the learning process as much as possible. Just as my teammates at the polling place had helped me, I believe that with empathy, we can all find opportunities to utilize our strength and

contribute to our community, no matter how small our works might seem, together we can make the community a better place!