

ARLETH AND DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Finding A Fast Track to College — And A Professional Niche —Through Apprenticeship



A Future Educator

When Arleth was in kindergarten, she created an “All About Me” book — a classroom assignment that allowed the children to reflect on their interests, including their dreams for the future. Arleth drew herself as a teacher. “I knew very early on that I wanted to teach,” she says.

Today, Arleth is a graduate of the CareerWise youth apprenticeship program where she trained with Denver Public Schools (DPS) as a paraeducator...and she still has that drawing from when she was five. Because of the classroom experience she gained in her apprenticeship, she knows she is ready for the professional role ahead and for the opportunity to influence the lives of young people. “I had teachers that really helped me when I was a student, including through some tough times in my middle school years. Educators really do have such a big impact on our lives — and I want to now have that impact for others.”

Arleth’s Path to a Professional Role

Arleth apprenticed at a local elementary school, a meaningful work environment where she was able to realize her childhood dream and begin impacting students’ lives.

“By the second year I had my own small office at the elementary school, where I was working with small groups of kids, six students or so at a time,” said Arleth. “I loved that I have my own little classroom and I was getting great feedback from the teachers that the students I was working with were growing in their confidence — and starting to raise their hands and participate more. It was a very rewarding experience.”

In addition to the professional experience, Arleth also kickstarted her journey through college. Because one of the foundations of apprenticeship is practical experience blended with academic theory, Arleth finished her collegiate requirements for the first year of studies in education. The combination of the two accelerate learning in both environments. “In our college classes we are sometimes asked to pretend we are teaching and we mimic a school environment. The skills we are learning in that setting are already applied skills for me; I am already doing this in real life.”

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~ Arleth



Covid Brings Unique Challenges — and Opportunities

According to Nicole Tembrock, Arleth’s supervisor and the Dean of Culture at Centennial Elementary, not only did Arleth’s time as a CareerWise apprentice help her fast track to college — it also helped her identify an area of focus within the broader field of education.

When Covid hit, and the staff and students were faced with the massive transition to remote learning, everyone was faced with the unexpected. “Arleth was very flexible and very nimble as we made these adjustments,” said Nicole. “And her skill as a bilingual educator played a significant role in helping families and students.”

Arleth was a vital resource in this time, helping families tackle technology issues, setting up their home learning environments, and helping families understand what students needed to be studying at home. During classroom hours, she was meeting with students online in small groups. “Having that opportunity to demonstrate leadership and take ownership — to form a relationship and figure out how best to work with the students and their families — was definitely a shining moment for her,” said Nicole.

The opportunity to work in the Early Childhood Education program presented itself when additional support was needed for a Spanish speaking family. Arleth helped the family identify what their student could work on at home and ensured that every resource was in place and the lessons were effective. “Arleth really flourished in that relationship,” said Nicole. “She has a skill she really brought to that family — and that experience opened up her interest in early childhood education.”

“I am confident the knowledge and skills I have learned here will benefit me in any field that I choose.”

~ Arleth

As a result of her interest and passion in early childhood education, Arleth moved to a role as a paraeducator for the second year of her apprenticeship — ultimately receiving a full-time job offer from DPS.

When asked what she would share with others, Arleth pauses for a moment, reflecting on her own success. “This program is amazing. I would tell others to just give it a try. You really can start working, learning what appeals to you, and doing whatever you love.”

Arleth is a great example of how apprenticeship can introduce better diversity and inclusion in our workforce as well. “It is so gratifying to see what these young people can accomplish,” said Nicole. “And we definitely need more Latinas and people of color so our students can look to and see themselves in their teachers.”