

平成 29 年度経済・マネジメント学群 AO 入試
英語区分
英語能力検査 1 問題文

【Directions】 Read the text to prepare for the interview and writing test.

- 1) You will be asked to answer questions and to write an essay based on this text.
- 2) You can take notes in this booklet and bring them with you so that you can refer to your notes during the interview and while you are writing your essay.

The destiny of Maria Ortiz, now in her twenty-second year of teaching science at Lewis B. Fox Middle School in an inner city neighborhood of Hartford, Connecticut, was probably decided on the very day she entered first grade, back in the village of Canóvanas, Puerto Rico, and encountered the woman she still refers to as “Mrs. Betancourt.”

She was not only a teacher, but a kind of mother to us—so loving to each kid that I can remember almost every single moment of first and second grade (I had her for two years) even though it was more than forty years ago. Every morning, she was waiting for us outside in the school yard. She hugged each kid like we were her long-lost children. Then she would gather us around her, like a mother hen with her chicks, and lead us inside.

And waiting for us would be hot cocoa and soda crackers—she didn't believe we should have to wait for mid-morning snack time; we got our snack first thing. Then she would get us singing, all of us. And her songs were full of tricks to make us learn things even while we were singing and having fun: songs about the alphabet, about animals and numbers. We would get so involved in her projects—drawing, building things, making a doll out of an old sock with buttons for its eyes—that we didn't realize how much we were learning. We knew we had to do schoolwork, but because of her warmth it didn't seem like work, it seemed like fun.

You see, I never planned to be a teacher. Since I liked science and was good at it, my parents wanted me to be a doctor. Instead, I studied pharmacology for four years in college and then started an apprenticeship in a drugstore. But as soon as I started

practicing, I knew it wasn't for me. I didn't want to spend my life putting labels on bottles and selling them to customers for high prices.

So I went back to my dean and told him I was in the wrong profession and was quitting. He asked why, and I said, "A highly regarded doctor sent in a prescription for a woman, and although it was only for aspirin, he gave it a scientific name, and the druggist told me to cover over the 'Bayer Aspirin' label and charge her \$20. I told him I wouldn't do it. If that's the kind of business it is, pharmacy is not for me. I have to have an opportunity to live!"

Then I thought I would change my major and become a science researcher. But my sister-in-law said, "Why don't you become a teacher?" Immediately Mrs. Betancourt flashed into my mind. And I said to myself: "Maybe that's what I really want to be—I want to be like her!"

So I began teaching right away. There was such a shortage of math and science teachers that they were willing to hire me even though I had never taken an education course and didn't know any methodology. I had to create everything myself, without relying on theories.

I started teaching science to students in grades 7 and 9, in a middle school in Hato Rey, near San Juan. As the newest teacher, naturally they gave me what they thought were the worst classes. (They didn't tell me that nine other teachers had already quit because they could not handle the kids.) I can still remember one of the students, Ismari Rivera. Our class was held in the art room, and when I came in, he was sitting atop the pottery wheel, slowly spinning around before an admiring audience of classmates. He gave me a look that said: "I dare you to get me off, or make me stop." I decided to ignore him and busied myself at my desk. After a while, Ismari looked up and said: "Are you the new teacher?" I said, "Yes." He paused, and then asked, "Are you going to leave us, too?" I said, no, I wasn't going to leave. And he continued to spin on the wheel and I continued to ignore him and began talking to the kids.

For the first week or two, I said nothing at all about science. I was operating totally on instinct, and my instinct told me that I needed first of all to get to know who these kids really were. The principal had said that they were mentally retarded, but I soon found out that they were not that at all, just angry. We talked about the kind of sports and music they liked, and they told me all about who was in their families, and of course they asked about mine, and I told them.

At the end of the first week, I knew so much about their lives, and somehow, that changed their behavior. They probably saw me as the kind of older teenager that they might want to be, and they were grateful that I was so interested in them. They saw themselves as rebels in the school because there was so much anger around them, in their lives, in school, in their homes.

After a while, I could tell them that I was a science teacher and that my job was to teach the science curriculum. But I promised that we would take one day each week and pull our chairs into a circle and talk about whatever was on their minds. We set some rules: everybody had to promise to listen to each other and to take turns if they wanted to talk. When somebody mentioned a problem they were having, one by one the other kids could give suggestions or make helpful comments.

Ismari didn't like this. He had gotten down from the pottery wheel when the other kids stopped paying attention to him. But now he just sat in the corner and sulked. And I still decided it was best to ignore him. So eventually, he moved closer and closer, until he was in the circle.

I remember one girl, named Waleska, who told us she hated her father because he had killed her little sister. She said that he had backed up his car and it had run over her sister. She couldn't understand how he could have done that. And so we talked about it, and we all decided that it had been an accident, and that her father didn't mean it. Slowly, with our help, Waleska was able to understand this too. The circle gave them a chance to let their emotions out and deal with them. There was some crying, at times, by all of us. But there was also a lot of laughter.

And so I became a teacher, just like that. After a few years I was offered a chance to come to America and teach for a year. I came to this school, in Hartford, in 1972. And I'm still here. I believe I make a difference not only by helping kids connect math and science to their lives, but also in understanding how to reach their goals in life—how to be somebody. It's strange: in Puerto Rico the kids seem so proud of themselves. But when they come here, they suffer a great blow to their esteem. We have to work very hard to help them convince themselves that their goals still matter, that nothing is impossible, that they can do it, that to be bilingual is to have power.

I don't feel fifty years old. I can still think like a teenager. There are three teachers in Hartford schools who were my students, here at Fox Middle, and another who's at the university, studying to be a teacher. And we owe it all to Mrs. Betancourt.

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