

Filma Fontanilla

City and state: Lakewood, WA

High school attended: Lakes High School

Graduation year: 1996

Colleges attended/degrees earned:

- Associate of arts degree from Pierce College
- Bachelor of arts degree from the University of Washington Tacoma
- Master's degree in education from Pacific Lutheran University



Current career/job:

Sixth-grade teacher at Hudtloff Middle School.

Describe the path you took from high school graduation to where you are today:

After high school, I had a baby. This challenged me with new and sometimes difficult obstacles. I went on to work in private banking in downtown Seattle but knew I couldn't get too far without a college degree. In 2001, I returned to college and left the corporate world. Initially, I returned to college to enter the healthcare profession. However, I knew my path was helping underrepresented students in the education system.

I began to work with the College Success Foundation (CSF) advocating for students at numerous high schools throughout Western Washington. When I graduated from the University of Washington Tacoma in 2007 with CSF, I was placed at Clover Park High School to work with the Achievers Scholarship Program. I remained there until the expiration of the Gates Grant. Afterwards, I knew I had to go into the classroom, particularly at the middle school level so they could be prepared for the challenges of high school. I returned to college at Pacific Lutheran University and started my teacher preparation program. I worked at Woodbrook Middle School, taught four years of Warrior Academy at Clover Park High School and am now at Hudtloff Middle School, the same junior high I attended many years ago.

How did your experiences in Clover Park School District help prepare you for this path?

My experiences helped prepare me because I know the community very well; I am a product of this community. Who else better to work with the

students and staff than someone who understands the nuances of Lakewood?

Who was the most influential teacher or administrator to you as a student in the district? Why?

Mrs. Carla Hooker (ninth-grade English teacher) and Ms. Bobby Richardson (high school counselor) were the most influential teachers in my life. Mrs. Hooker taught me that it is okay to be wrong. She said to own your actions and understand that life isn't always fair. Regardless, it is your actions that impact the next move. Ms. Richardson really provided the support I needed through my high school years and supported me with the more difficult outside issues I had to endure. If it weren't for her, high school would have been more difficult than it already was and I can honestly say, I don't think I would be here now without her.

Do you have any favorite memories from when you attended school in Clover Park School District?

My favorite memory when I attended school in CPSD is the DECA conferences I was able to attend. Not only were these an opportunity to learn more about how to present ideas to a real life company but more importantly, it taught me how to network with others and the importance of social capital. It's not just what you know; it is who you know.

What opportunities exist in your career sector for new graduates? Is post-secondary education required for this field?

Plenty of opportunities exist in my new sector for graduates. Being able to tell the students that I work with now that, with college, you can come back here and teach others.