



Teacher from the Democratic Republic of Congo Learns English to Teach French

Portsmouth, Virginia – Tshimanga Mubiayi had little choice but to leave the Democratic Republic of Congo and his family at the age of 38 for ‘political reasons’ and move to the United States in 1991, but he did not leave teaching.

Tshimanga Mubiayi is in his first year of teaching 7th and 8th grade French at Churchland Middle School in Portsmouth, Virginia and has come a long way personally in the process. “I always was a teacher, but I had to learn English here first and I had to work to save money,” he explained.

Tshiluba is Mubiayi’s native language but he was fortunate enough to attend a Catholic boarding school which he felt was the best elementary school in his hometown, and learned French when he was 5 or 6 years old. French is the administrative and one of the national languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and most education is carried out in French. During high school Mubiayi took three years of Latin.

Mubiayi was teaching Educational Psychology to student teachers at the community college level in the Democratic Republic of Congo after receiving his bachelor’s degree from the National University of Zaire. That was right before he had to move. His family followed him here four years later in 1995. Mubiayi was married at the time with two children, and now has 6 children.

“In order to become a teacher in the public schools here I cleaned offices, washed dishes, and I was a bus boy,” he explained. All the while, Mubiayi was slowly but surely learning to understand and speak the English language.

After fourteen years working as a Nursing Assistant for different medical facilities, including 7 years for Capital Hospice in the DC area from 2000 to 2007, Mubiayi took it upon himself to get his license to teach through Virginia’s Community Colleges’ EducateVA Career Switcher Program and is currently in the process of getting his Masters in Clinical Psychology at North Carolina Central University.

The EducateVA program allowed him to apply his four year degree from the National University of Zaire and his work experience to qualify for a 16-week alternative program to get his teaching license while still working at his nursing job.

Tshimanga Mubiayi is well traveled and has visited Belgium, Germany, Italy, Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia, and France several times. Now he enjoys teaching and sharing his knowledge of French and his travels with his students. “In the community college in Congo I did a lot of research and published internationally. It’s very rewarding to get back to pure teaching and what I love to do.”

“Some people think teaching in America is tough and low pay. For me, it is my calling and very rewarding.” Mubiayi has students he taught 20 years ago still contact him to stay in touch. Now, at age 54, he’s developing relationships with students that will most likely do the same. “The reward is spending time with the kids, meeting them in the halls, exchanging with them and practicing their French with them. I really enjoy it.”

Getting back to teaching or changing careers to teaching is becoming a trend for many baby boomers, though the trend remains for teacher shortages even as Virginia’s Community Colleges strive to place more and more Career Switcher teachers into public school systems via their fast-track teacher licensure program, EducateVA.

EducateVA is a hybrid program using a combination of online and onsite instruction and allowing candidates with a bachelor’s degree and five years of work experience to receive their teaching license within sixteen weeks, all while maintaining their current job and responsibilities.

The program has helped hundreds of teachers to become employed in school divisions across Virginia, and this academic year alone 135 individuals will obtain initial teaching licenses in the critical shortage areas of English as a Second Language, English, Foreign Language, Mathematics and Science at the middle or high school and secondary levels.

French is one foreign language subject with shortages of teachers in our public schools. It is spoken today by about 350 million people around the world as either a native or a second language, with significant populations in 54 countries. It is an official language in 31 countries and it is an official language of all United Nations agencies and a large number of international organizations. Although it has no official recognition on a federal level, French is the third most-spoken language in the United States, after English and Spanish.

For a complete list of critical teacher shortage areas contact your public school system or visit the Virginia Department of Education website at www.doe.virginia.gov. For more information regarding Virginia’s Community Colleges Career Switcher Program visit a nearby community college or www.EducateVA.com.