



My teacher is my
CLASSMATE



Antz Cadet

Antz Cadet grew up in Haiti where he spoke Haitian Creole. As a boy, he learned just a bit of English and Spanish in school but not enough to master either language. Feeling that God may be calling him to religious life, he enrolled at Divine Word College in 2019 but before he could dive into classes like

philosophy and theology, he needed to learn English. He started in Level 1 of the Intensive English Language Institute.

English as a Second Language Senior Instructor Michelle Vargo was one of his first teachers. Antz said she was energetic and made learning exciting. It didn't take long for Antz to start picking up English and after a few semesters, he moved onto the undergraduate program.

This past fall, Antz started his senior year. He signed up for an Introduction to Spanish class, hoping to expand what he learned as a child.

On the first day of class when students started filing in, a familiar face entered the room. Vargo, who also had some experience with Spanish but had not seriously practiced in about 20 years, was taking the class, too. Antz and his first ESL teacher were about to spend another semester together learning a language but this time they were both students.

From time to time, DWC faculty and staff enroll in classes to learn a new skill or enrich their understanding of a familiar subject.

"I think it's a humble gesture for them," Antz said. The situation wasn't just unusual for Antz. Several of Michelle's other former students were in the Spanish class and many of them knew

she had prior experience with the language. She said that increased her stress when it was time to present in class but she knew that even her missteps could be a teaching opportunity for her students-turned-classmates.

"I hope they learned that learning a language is important, it's time-consuming, it's useful and everybody makes mistakes, even the teacher," Michelle said. "I think students perceive English teachers as being highly intelligent and very gifted with language, and we are with English, but maybe we're not as gifted with other languages. So, it was important to me that they could see that I make mistakes and I'm not perfect and that it is ok to not be perfect."

Antz said it's comforting to know that some DWC instructors, like Michelle, understand firsthand what it feels like for their students to learn a new language.