

A. How did your course work prepare you to teach your content area

When I first thought about becoming a teacher, I started to look at the classes enrolled in from the perspective of what I can use in teaching. In my academic career I took a wide variety of courses in both English and Theatre. I am particularly proud of the work and study I have done in LGBTQ studies. One of the main focuses for my teaching career is the desire to work with LGBTQ youth, especially those in rural communities where the resources for such youth are limited and dropout and violence (both suicidal and attacks) rates are too high. One of my strongest beliefs is that literature, creative writing, and drama are greatest tools to help students explore their identities and create acceptance within the school.

The greatest weaknesses I have is in the use of technology. I know the basics of technology, but I know I have to learn more. In my work I have done in the classroom, I have astounded at some of the technological talents students have done in presentations. In theatre I have only the basic knowledge in stagecraft and I need to improve in that area.

One of my strengths that I have gained through my academic career and one I want to help my students to obtain is the ability to think out of the box in terms of interpreting literature, to take chances in writing, to be personally involved in what they create and learn. My approach to learning is to find something in the work that sparks my curiosity, my interest and passion. I'd rather create something whether it be an essay or creative writing, presentation or performance in which they can build on, some passion which last beyond the assignment. In my academic learning creating something in which I learned about myself was more important than what grade I got.

One of the most important aspects of my learning is in both my high school and collegian learning was that my classes went out into the world to learn. In high school we took field trips to Ashland Shakespeare Festival to study theatre and two the San Juan Islands to study biology. In college, one class spent a week in Neah Bay in a Native American Culture class and a week on coast to study oceanographically. I have also studied abroad in London UK and Rome Italy. I believe to truly learn you have to immerse yourself in the culture.

2. How does my life experience impact my teaching philosophy.

Growing up I went through all types of schools from well funded Catholic school to inner city public school with limited resources. I attended a different small town school for the first four years of my life. My junior high school was a arts magnet school in which I was bussed an hour each way and my senior high school was a small brand new private school which emphasized the arts but didn't have equipment so much of our learning was done by experimental improvisation. Through all this I learned to be adaptable.

The first point in being adaptable is to recognize that everyone comes from different background. The background includes what students have learned and how and when they learned it. Looking back over my own education I realize there were somethings I learned twice and somethings I didn't learn at all because one school taught it in year and another school taught in a different year if at all. It is important to find ways to discover what the student has learned and what he hasn't learned and find ways to integrate what he hasn't learned into what you are teaching.

I have what can be called an overactive imagination. I see the world with an artistically creative imagination. My ninth-grade teacher Mrs. Paulis saw this and allowed me to submit

assignments in creative ways. She also defended my choices of independent reading because she saw that subject matter of the book satisfied a question I had, a question I couldn't put into words. In the ninth grade we read The Diary Of Young Girl by Anne Frank. During the reading of it we kept a journal. I have kept a journal for much of life since then.

Growing up switching towns and schools virtually every year I became very shy and an outsider in every community. By age ten I realized I was always going to be an outsider, never to belong to any social group. Theatre, creative, writing, and literature opened up new worlds for me, allowed to explore the world in ways that made sense to me. For example, being transgender in a time where being transgender was (and still is in many places) considered a psychological disorder, the theatre arts, literature, and creative writing gave me a safe space to explore identities that were different from me but at the same time I identified. I remember in high school being so disappointed because I was never allowed to read any female parts in the plays we read. I connected with female characters much more than the male characters which we spent too much time analyzing in my mind.

One of the weaknesses I had and still have been that if it the topic interests me I go all in for it and if it doesn't interest me I will only put in the minimal amount of effort into it. One of things I have been trying in doing in my studies in the last year has been trying to adapt or transform projects I have little interest into something that sparks my curiosity. This is how I wish to teach: adapting lesson plans and the material to fit the needs and curiosity of the student.

C. Education is a social good and structurally unjust.

Students learn from difference. They learn from learning from each other. Studies have shown that students learn far more and learn on a deeper level of understanding when they are in groups where each student brings a different strength, a different perspective to the situation, to the discussion. Social learning isn't only about the world around them, about knowledge and information, about their history and their future. Social learning is about learning about themselves, about what works and doesn't work for them, about their own talents and strengths and passions and perspectives. Social learning is about what is right for them and how that fits into the larger world around them. From high school on, I believed that I could learn from anyone. I believe there is some knowledge in every project I did, every paper I wrote, every book I read that taught me about me, or sometimes, it taught me who I wasn't.

I can't say that education is structurally unjust. The structure of education is a skeleton, a framework of what should be taught and when it should be taught. The structure of education is a basic theory and like all theories there are exceptions. I recently read a book about the building skyscrapers in New York City. Each developer faced similar conditions in hazards in building sparkling glass towers and each developer developed different methods in dealing with the same conditions. In the end, some worked, and some didn't. In the end each skyscraper became unique. Education only becomes unjust when its structure is blanketed in uniformity, when there is no room for adaption and individuality. The structure of education is just a skeleton, how we cover the skeleton with flesh, with clothing, is what makes the individual student unique.

Growing up I moved around a lot. I am certain there were some things I was taught twice and some things I wasn't taught at all because the educational structure was different in

different states. In the ninth grade I flunked Algebra, partially because I didn't conceptualize in mathematical terms and partially because I hadn't developed to where I couldn't grasp abstract terms. The following year, I passed geometry and in eleventh grade I passed pre-calculus. But I really understand a lot of this until I took stage design in college, where I was able to put abstract conceptions into something I was passionate about. Education only works spurs passion and curiosity. Right now, structure of education doesn't foster individuality, it fosters conformity and uniformity and political correctness over a discussion of ideas. The structure of education focuses on right and wrong answers rather than finding a common ground. So maybe in that sense the structure of education is unjust and needs to be changed.

D. How has working with youth have impacted your decision in becoming a teacher.

About eighteen months ago I did a student teaching internship in Brooklyn New York with twelve grade language arts class. This was the first time these students had been classroom in almost two years. Which the situation more stressful was students were having to prepare for their senior graduating projects which consisted of taking two pieces of reading material, one fiction and one academic and create a paper and presentation on a topic connecting the two. Many of the students were doing the bare minimum; many chose the shortest book and the most recent scholarly material they read. The connections they made were the most obvious and safest in regards of interpretation. As I worked with students, I kept asking them why they chose the topic and the materials that they did and very through could give me a clear answer. As I worked with students, I kept pressing them to find something personal in the work they were doing. When we got the presentations, those students who were able to engage with the material on a personal level were more able to give much better presentations.

I worked with high school students on developing characters. In one exercise students picked a photograph surrounding desegregation of schools in the 1950s and then wrote a monologue for a person in the monologue. One girl chose to write from the perspective not of one of the black students entering the school but from the white students protesting the intergradation. About halfway through the voice of the monologue changed into student's fear of how her whole world was changing and how she had no control. When she ended the reading of her monologue there was complete silence. No one, including the instructor said anything for minute. And then they just moved on to the next student.

It was at that point I wanted to be teacher. My goal as a teacher, especially as a teacher in the creative arts is to help students find their own voice, to help students find their own way of processing material which makes sense to them. I recently read an article that college counselors report while individual subject test scores have gone up, students have had more difficulty in transferring and adapting knowledge learn in one subject to another subject.