

Prompt D: How has your time working with youth informed your decision to become a teacher?

Many people have innate passions that drive their existence; some must write, others must sing, and yet others must make things with their hands; I must teach. I did not identify this within myself until during the course of my undergraduate studies. As long as I can remember I was the go-to person for my classmates when they had questions about school or needed help studying. This only became more pronounced in college. There, not only did others see this in me, but I also noticed the passion and joy teaching brought me. I remember leading a late-night review session for a mid-term the next morning. What had started as a small group came to include half the class, and there I was, at the whiteboard standing on a chair to reach the top, furiously scribbling notes and asking my peers questions, when I looked out and realized they were all engaged and later told me they understood the material and cared more about it than they had before. I was amazed. From then on, I sought out as many opportunities as I could to work with my peers as a tutor, often creating positions that hadn't previously existed. I sought feedback from all of my friends and "students" as to how they best learned and in what ways did they struggle to learn from their various professors. At twenty, I was spending my limited free time exploring and refining my own pedagogy.

As this passion of mine became first evident in a college setting, I set my goals on becoming a university professor. This further drove me to seek out new ways I could teach and tutor my peers as I prepared for my future studies and career. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. I had been planning to attend a master's program at the University of Toronto, but given the state of the world opted to defer my enrollment. During the next year, I had an abundance of time to reflect on what I wanted in life and my career and I realized that being a university professor was not it. I struggled to see how my work would help others more than myself. Having grown up in

an extremely impoverished community, where I returned during the pandemic, I was acutely aware of the injustices present in higher education. How could I act as an agent of change by isolating myself from those who stand to benefit the most from education?

This reflection was motivated by my time working as a tutor both formally and informally throughout high school and college. While my experiences were not narrowly with those under eighteen, as an adult I could still look back on my interactions. What the world needs is teachers who are invested in their students as individuals, not cogs in the machine. I want to teach high school because I want to inspire students to think critically, but also to be their advocate in life and education.