

I fell into teaching by accident. I struggled in school; I tested well and loved to learn, but I struggled to finish homework assignments and stay on task. So although I am a lifelong learner, I never pictured myself working in education because I learned best in a less-structured environment. After finishing a web development bootcamp, however, I found myself accepting a job as an elementary school technology teacher as a temporary gig while I looked for a position as a web developer. Eventually I got exactly the kind of coding job I was looking for—but after the initial excitement of achieving my goal wore off, I found that I missed teaching. I had accidentally uncovered a passion for teaching that overshadowed the higher pay and glamor of working for a tech startup. I found that I just couldn't bring myself to care as much about a company's profits as I did about my students.

So I went back to my unexpectedly-discovered passion: teaching technology to elementary school students. In my year and a half away, I'd thought a lot about the curriculum I'd been developing and how it could be improved. I went out of my way to make my classroom a positive environment for kids like me. I emphasized student choice within an approved framework to inspire curiosity and make the material relevant to kids' interests. And I found that the naturally curious and independently-driven kids thrived in such an environment—but many students floundered without adequate structure. This is when I started to realize the immense challenge that teachers face in trying to design a curriculum and classroom environment that works for the diverse needs of 20-30 kids.

In my time as an elementary school technology teacher, I have endeavored to find the perfect balance of factors to meet the needs of every child in my classroom. I've observed and learned from other teachers, taking bits and pieces of each teacher's style to create my own. And I've come up with lesson plans of my own, learning by trial and error. I've tried to create the right balance of freedom and structure so that every kid in my class can be guided by curiosity and excitement rather than obligation—but that those who need structure receive it. I've tried to create lessons that are deep enough for advanced students and accessible enough for students who struggle. Because I teach kids from Kindergarten to 5th grade, I've learned that the techniques that work for one age group fail with other age groups; and learning what works at each grade level is starting to give me a picture of how teachers in each successive grade level build on the last. With each success, I feel an incredible sense of accomplishment. And with each failure, I'm given invaluable opportunities to learn and adapt my style. Nothing is more rewarding than seeing students repeat or utilize skills I've taught them, and nothing is more educational than seeing them fail to grasp what I'm trying to teach.

I've been able to use my previous studies in psychology and anthropology, as well as my experience in social services and the Peace Corps, to create lessons that excite and inspire. With my unconventional background and diverse skillset, I can approach tasks from an unexpected angle. But without a formal education in pedagogy, my teaching has some rough edges. While I've learned a great deal from the teachers I work with and from my own trial and error, I think the next step in my journey is to fill the holes in my resume and get the formal training I need to be the best teacher I can be. I want to strengthen my classroom management skills without becoming tyrannical. I want to gain a clearer idea of educational benchmarks and child development at different stages of growth. I think Evergreen, with its focus on inclusion over dogma, is the perfect place for me to become the teacher I want to be: a teacher for every student.

After graduation, my goal is to find a certified position on the Olympic peninsula teaching technology. It's a brand new field for which the curriculum hasn't been thoroughly written. I've been developing my own curriculum over my two years of teaching and I'm excited to continue developing it. I love the freedom to teach a wide variety of topics, and the challenge of making complex topics accessible to grade schoolers. I'm excited by the importance of teaching media literacy and safe use of technology in an age of constantly shifting technology. And by working with kids from Kindergarten to 5th grade, I can introduce concepts from simple machines to robotics to give them a basic understanding of how the machines that support their lives work. By helping them become active users of technology rather than passive consumers, I hope to give them greater control over their lives. By working with children's natural curiosity and drive to understand the world in a tactile way, I hope to help kids develop their innate ability as inventors. And I think Evergreen is the place for me to learn the best way to accomplish this.