

Connery Gschwend

Oxford Scholars: Learning

Every person has a different style of learning, it is up to the individual to find what the most effective way for them to learn is and take advantage of it. Like most high school seniors, I have gone through 14 years of receiving an education at school. I now definitely can realize how I learn, and which moments in school have led to my personal educational growth and realization to help prepare me for my future.

The basic categories that come to mind for different types of students are auditory, visual, and tangible learners. I have found that I am more of a visual and hands-on learner, but there is more to what makes someone acquire knowledge better than just focusing on one of these three categories. Looking back on my school experiences, the way I take in knowledge most efficiently is when I am truly interested in the topic being covered in a class. In my sixth grade English class, we had to read the book *Everlost* and analyze how it follows the common path in stories of the 'Hero's Journey'. I greatly enjoyed reading the book, so I was compelled to examine all the steps of the protagonist's journey in depth, as well as retain the knowledge I had gained from the assignment. The very next year in my science class, I was given the task of creating a model of a plant cell using items found in my house. This project idea captivated my interest, and as soon as I got home I began searching for potential cell parts, snatching a shoelace from a drawer to be used as endoplasmic reticulum and then quickly researching the organelle to remind myself of its function, which I would remember for years to come. Whether the subject is a pivotal battle in World War II or a real-life application of the Pythagorean Theorem, as long as I am intrigued by the topic I can learn it effectively.

In another case, my academic interest was drawn to an entire subject. My first introduction to a real biology class was on the first day of seventh grade. As my teacher began lecturing, I found myself intently listening to the presentation, rather than simply being a bystander as I would sometimes do in other classes. It just seemed natural that one should learn about the study of living organisms. Since then, my great interest in studying biology has only increased. In the AP Biology class I am currently taking, I

have found that studying how organisms function is a gateway to making a difference in the world. Through researching molecular biology, I could work on improving techniques like gene therapy that can effectively treat diseases and disorders. I have been exposed to fantastic opportunities to help others by improving the body's health or maintaining crucial ecosystems in this biology class. It is truly exciting to learn about these topics that can help solve problems in life that I have interest in. This personal growth through realization of a subject I was attracted to in school has helped to prepare me for my future, as I plan on majoring in biology when I attend college.

A critical part of learning is something that is worked on in all grades of school: cooperation. The first very successful group project I had that did not involve my young classmates and I spouting our ideas without actually listening to each other was in third grade, in which we had to create a poster representing a Native American tribe. After some initial arguments, we began really considering each others' ideas, planning out what we were going to do and then dividing the work. The clean-looking poster on the Pomo people was one of the results I was most proud of in my elementary school career. The fact that we had all contributed and used our skills to create this result made it very rewarding. This was when I first began really growing in my academic cooperation skills, which continued to improve with more group projects in years to come. I am very glad that my education has allowed me to greatly improve these skills, as my visit to Georgetown University included hearing the professors talk about the emphasis on teamwork and cooperation in the biology department and how important these abilities are in careers,

After visiting various universities in the past few years and listening to what skills are required to succeed in college courses, I really feel that I have been well prepared. One skill that is always emphasized in college classes is independent work. I will definitely be able to deal with this when I head off to college. I tried challenging myself in my sophomore year by taking an Honors Chemistry course, which was based heavily on independent work outside of class, and was able to succeed in it. This class made a noticeable difference in my work ethic for future classes. As my brother, a college student, has told me, another key component in many discussion-based college courses is giving presentations in front of the class. From speaking about my science

project on electricity in third grade to elaborating on my thoughts on gun control my senior year in high school, I have had plenty of practice in public speaking. A presentation I gave that stands out to me most was one in my freshman year Spanish class. I had chosen to study for a test rather than practice for my speech the night before, so the combination of being nervous about public speaking, being unprepared, and having to give the speech in a language I wasn't fluent in made this a very daunting task for me. However, when I finally had to present to the class, I found that even with a great deal of struggling, I was able to coherently get my point across and complete the presentation. This was a huge boost to my public speaking confidence: if I was able to give a decent speech under those circumstances, I had nothing to be nervous about. I'm very pleased with the position my educational journey has put me in at the end my high school career. Outside of academics, I am very proud to be a part of the community of students Cardinal Newman, which is a feeling I'm sure I will be able to experience again in college. Doing service work of my choice at Newman has taught me that learning can be done by helping others; something that I will definitely keep in mind in the future. As I go on to attend either Georgetown University or UCLA next year, I can truly say that I am confident in taking the next step in my education.