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Teaching

The Chinese Philosopher Xun Kuang once said, “tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.” Throughout my schooling I have come to agree with this philosophy. Many of the most meaningful learning experiences I had came as a result of teachers involving students in activities that make the lessons enjoyable or applicable to real life. I remember more about subjects where teachers inspired me to participate than from classes that I sat in the back impassively listening to teachers talk at me about topics I did not see the purpose of learning.

Throughout elementary and high school I found that I worked best when teachers mixed creativity with learning. I was able to focus better when I considered the task fun. When I was in 5th grade, my science teacher made his students create jingles to remember the equation to photosynthesis. To this day I still remember the most popular girls singing their song along with an interpretive dance. The simulations of the Oregon Trail, Civil War, and Gold Rush highlighted the struggles that the people who experienced these events felt. As we "experienced" dysentery and horse deaths, we felt sympathetic toward those who actually faced these events. In AP US History during my junior year, a couple of students made a board game about Al Capone. I don't think I will ever forget that Al Capone died of a syphilis-induced heart attack because I remember yelling at my competitors that I was going to reach that heart attack first so I

could win. All the experiences that immersed me in the learning have a larger impact on my learning than most other classroom experiences.

Going outside the classroom to explore the world also leaves lasting impressions on my learning. Field trips make what students learn about seem more realistic and applicable to their lives. When I was in sixth grade, my class took a field trip to an exhibit on King Tut in San Francisco. Seeing all of the artifacts from when he was alive drove home that I was not learning about made-up facts, I was learning about actual events that had transpired. Visiting the Exploratorium for my physics class made physics click for me. What I heard in lecture seemed like abstract theory to me until I actually saw the laws in practice. My Spanish classes have taken field trips to places where Spanish is spoken regularly. This helps us to practice the skill outside of our class group and reminds us that we can actually use this skill in our everyday lives. When I took a trip to the courthouse during my government class, I got to see political law in action. I saw a deglamorized version of a scene displayed frequently on television. What we read about in our textbook could not begin to compare to seeing a real-life trial. This experience increased my love of the court system and cemented my desire to pursue a law degree.

The classroom environment itself is another big factor in determining whether or not I thrive in a classroom. I have found that smaller class sizes encourage me to engage in lessons because I am more comfortable in small groups. I get to know the people in the class better, and we help each other and root for everyone's success. In these classes I can get more individualized attention from the teachers. There are more chances to participate in conversations and to ask questions of the teacher.

The teacher's personality and their teaching style are important determinants of my success in a class. The approachability of a teacher is a factor that contributes to my success in a

classroom. When a teacher seems friendly and understanding, I know that they want me to succeed and will work with me to overcome my academic limitations. They help me finish the work I need to do to comprehend the lesson while letting me work around any personal struggles I am facing outside of school. In turn, I work harder in these teachers' classes because I want to show them that their faith in me is warranted. Teachers who know me well and help remind me of my abilities when I struggle help me get past difficulties and keep me on the path to success.

The many learning opportunities I've had through my school experiences have taught me different lessons. When I was in third grade my teacher had us live through a simulation of the Oregon Trail. I was voted into the leadership position of my small group by my groupmates. Halfway through the adventure, the groups were allowed to pick new leaders. My best friend Maddie was voted into this position. I was mad at Maddie for taking my spot, but I was even more enraged by my groupmates because I felt like they did not trust me to lead them to success. After a few days, I recognized that I was only mad because I actually did not trust them to lead our group to success. This fun simulation actually taught me to let other people help me and even to release control to others.

Sometimes adversity also teaches me new lessons. One of the hardest classes I have ever taken is AP Spanish. A major focus of this class is improving speaking skills, which is my weakest point. I have continually struggled with this course and even considered dropping the class at one point. I had a hard time coming to terms with the fact that I was not one of the best students in the class. I had to put in more effort than most of the other students, and I still did not sound as good as they did. I am glad that I continued taking this class because it taught me that I don't have to be perfect at everything. I realized that it is okay to ask people for help so that I could improve in areas where I feel weak. I also learned how hard it is to succeed. Before AP

Spanish I never had to work hard to be one of the best in the class. All of the hard work I put into learning Spanish taught me that just because I need to work hard to be good at something doesn't mean that it is not worth the effort.

All of the experiences, effort, and learning throughout my entire high school career has prepared me to continue my studies at the university level. I have learned to communicate with my teachers about my homework and grades. Working on group projects with people I don't know well has prepared me to meet and learn with new people in college. Group discussions have taught me to confidently share my ideas even when I'm unsure how others will receive them. Hearing success stories of past graduates and receiving advice from my teachers about how to succeed in college has made me feel confident that I can thrive at college and in my career.

As I go to college, I think my education thus far has given me the skills necessary to thrive. All of my experiences have helped me realize what I need to do to be successful. School has taught me to persevere and put all of my effort into everything I do. I feel safe going off to college knowing that if I face any major struggles, I will have a support system at home and at Cardinal Newman to help me.