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Educational Journey

My most prominent memory of my early school days is getting these little five page books called “decodables” in kindergarten and first grade. I loved reading them so much that I kept all of them in a shoebox under my bed until I was in fifth grade. They were the simplest of stories yet they helped open up a whole new world of literature that I had no idea existed until then. I have always enjoyed learning, and school but there are a few teachers and educational experiences that stand out and that will be with me for the rest of my life.

In second grade, I had to do a project on a United States president. I chose George Washington. This was the first “research” project that I had to complete, and I remember being so excited to learn more about Washington. Ever since then, my favorite projects have been those about historical figures. In third grade I researched Ruby Bridges and in eighth it was Bessie Coleman. Finding out more about people of the past has always been something that I have enjoyed doing, but it really started with that first project in second grade. This was one of those moments, even if I didn’t realize it at the time, that helped shape my interests now.

My seventh and eighth grade years were spent at Hillcrest Middle School. Even though middle school is stereotypically an awful time, I had a blast. I loved all my teachers and being at a small school my classmates and I had been together for four years at that point and we had grown close over those years. Despite having fun going on amazing field trips and doing projects, I was always being prepped for starting High School. This is one of the things that my

Middle School did really well. I'm not exactly sure what it was that made myself and my classmates so prepared, maybe it was the homework load or the rigor of the classes, whatever it was, it worked.

One of the classes that I feel like I learned the most in was science, both in seventh and eighth grade. My teacher, Mr. Blanco, was a very intimidating man from Spain. At times he was impossible to understand because of his thick accent, but you got used to it eventually. He taught through repetition, yelling out formulas until they were ingrained in our brains, and replaying parts of the "Bill Nye" theme song until we were able to recite that inertia was a property of matter in our sleep. It may seem as if this is the teaching method of someone who doesn't really care about "actually teaching" but in reality I learned more in his class than I have in any of my science classes since then. Not only was he able to get almost every single student he had into Biology as freshmen, I still remember Mr. Blanco singing at the top of his lungs that mass divided by volume equals density. He was extremely passionate about science and he truly wanted us to learn, and to enjoy learning about science and it showed through everything he taught us.

Another teacher at Hillcrest that helped me along my educational journey was my seventh grade teacher, Mr. Collins. That year we studied a lot of Shakespeare and completed multiple book reports. Even though this wasn't the class that I really learned to write in, it was the class that helped me figure out what kind of person that I wanted to be. I have always been a shy person, even with the class that I had practically grown up with. Due to Mr. Collins' love of Shakespeare, we put on the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He and our drama teacher chose who would play which character, and much to my surprise I was chosen to play Helena, one of the leads. I wasn't sure if I would be able to get up on stage and perform for the majority of the

play, but because of the support from my classmates I overcame my fear and the play went off without a hitch. This experience really helped me become more confident, and allowed me to become more like the person I aspire to be.

To me, one of the most important qualities of a good teacher is how much they love the subject they are teaching. If they don't love what they are doing, as a student, you aren't going to love being in their class. One of the teachers that I had freshman year at Cardinal Newman was really passionate about teaching and her subject that it made me want to go to class everyday even if the subject wasn't my personal favorite. Ms. Schumacher, was one of the best teachers that I had at Newman, and that is partially due to how excited she got about teaching us math. I learned so much both times I had her as a teacher, and I know that she is one of those teachers that really helped me grow as a person.

Another teacher that influenced my way of thinking and helped prepare me for my time in college is Dr. Berry. I first had her as my teacher for advanced english sophomore year. In this class, although we weren't reading the same books or doing the same activities as the other sophomore classes, I was still learning more about the world than I would've had I not been in her class. It seemed that her focus for the year was dystopian societies and philosophy. At first I wasn't really interested, but as the year progressed I became more and more excited just to come to class because I knew that whatever we learned or did that day would be worthwhile.

Over the years I have had many amazing teachers. All of these teachers had one common goal, they all wanted their students to succeed. Having a teacher believe in you and be there to help you if you need it is extremely helpful, especially when the going gets tough. Another thing these teachers had in common was their passion for their subject and for learning. If the teachers don't want to be there, then the students won't be willing to listen and learn. The teachers that I

have had over the years have greatly affected not only the way I learn, but how prepared I am to begin college in the fall.