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Oxford Scholars

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### Journey

When I think of those first two or three years of schooling, preschool and kindergarten, I do not recall the lessons and lectures with which we were subject to for following years. Instead I recollect my encounters with peers, and my interactions with friends. I had the benefit of attending Healdsburg Nursery Preschool with my two best friends at the time, Brent and Baxter. We would ride around the playground on trikes and run around on the play structure, often creating imaginary worlds and settings around us.. And while I learned about the alphabet and colors and animals too, the most valuable takeaways from preschool were the lessons I learned outside on the playground: how to share, how to make friends, and how to interact with my peers in general.

These social lessons continued in Kindergarten. This time I didn't have the crutch of already having friends, as Brent, Baxter and I all went to different schools. I attended St. Eugene's, a kindergarten to eighth grade elementary school. The first day of kindergarten was scary but exciting. Nothing since has compared to walking into the classroom and not knowing anyone. Knowing that many students wouldn't know each other, the classroom was composed of many small circular tables as opposed to desks, to allow for an encourage interaction. Eventually I managed to make friends in Kindergarten, and on the side learned a thing or two as well.

My next eight years at St. Eugene's were divided into the lower and upper hall. The lower hall consisted of grades 1-4, and upper 5-8. Two major events in my education occurred

during my years in the lower hall. The first being in First Grade, with a class project called the Reading Dragon. A big cutout dragon head was stapled to the wall in the hallway, and for every three books read by a student, a scale would be added to the dragon's tail. Once the tail reached the principal's door, the first grade class would get a pizza party! This class project marks the moment when I realized that I loved to read. I enjoyed being read books before, and even would memorize the story read to me and repeat to my little brother while showing him the pictures; however, it was with the Reading Dragon that my love of reading truly fostered.

The second event in the lower hall that I consider significant happened in the third grade. This was the first time classes had been divided based on the speed of which students learned. The class would be divided up into a regular paced math, a quicker paced math, and a moderate paced math. To decide placement, we were given a multiplication quiz. The day after the class took it, I as well as three other classmates were taken into the hall to be told that we had been chosen for the faster paced curriculum. We had all missed 3 questions or less out of 100 on the quiz. As we went to return to class, the teacher, Mrs. Haas, asked me to stay behind for one second. She then informed me that I had actually received a perfect score on the quiz, and was the only one to do so. It was that day in third grade that I realized for myself that I was smart.

By third and fourth grade my super-close friendships from preschool were not forgotten but for the most part not thought of; Baxter had moved out of state and Brent had made other close friends in Healdsburg. In my recollection my core group of five friends that would have for the rest of my St. Eugene's days really began to form in the upper hall, although I suppose we had to all be friends in third and fourth as well. It's difficult to remember. Definitely, though, we were friends in fifth grade. Our parents would call us the Six-Pack, because we were seemingly

inseparable. Chris Buse, Sean Houlihan, Adam Hinde, Connor Rubattino, Colin Imm, and myself. These friends had a large impact on my life.

One of the most important aspect of my life that these friends influenced my career in athletics. Because my friends were heavily active in sports, I wanted to be as well. I've found athletics to be a deeply fulfilling part of my education, a nice complement to the classroom. I find that sports took the social lessons that I spoke about learning in preschool and kindergarten, and adding to those skills in a more advanced way. Sports taught me how to work with teammates, how to be a leader and use positive encouragement to better my teammates, as well as how to respect my coaches. These skills were applicable in the classroom as well as on the court or field.

By the fifth grade, school comprises of more math and science and less utility of the creative side of your brain so heavily emphasized when in preschool or kindergarten. That's to be expected, as when one grows up one matures. However, my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Ferris, did not like that school was this way. I first experienced Mrs. Ferris as a teacher in fifth grade for Reading. The fifth graders would walk to the sixth grade classroom, where Mrs. Ferris was waiting to greet us with pom-poms and cheerful song in which she would greet each student with a happy "Good Morning! Good Morning, to You!" It seemed silly then, and seems silly now, but I look back at it and I'm glad that I was met with that positivity each day for that one class.

Having her as our main teacher for 6th was even more exciting. Mrs. Ferris heavily encouraged us draw, write stories, and enjoy school. She held a writing club after school on Tuesdays called Writer's Salon, and gave an extra point on homework if it was colored. We had fun parties at the end of each month, and created skits for greek myths when we got to that part

of world history. I thought that what she brought to her job was invaluable to the upper hall classes, a spark of creativity.

To me the two most important grades in the upper hall were grades 6 and 7. On one of the last days of school there'd be "Move-Up Day" where you go to the next grades' classroom and meet the teacher. On Move-Up Day my classmates and I found our seventh grade teacher, Mrs. DeVault, to be terrifying, scaring us with the workload and calling students out for not paying attention, even if they were. The first day of seventh grade, however, we learned it was all a ruse, a joke that Mrs. DeVault plays every year. She was actually a very kind and patient teacher(albeit quite sarcastic at times. I think she and Mrs. Calhoun would get along very well). Her English/literature/writing class is arguably the most important English class of mine to date, as it prepared me for the essay writing of high school classes and college testing.

Entering high school, I found myself on an upper track for my classes. I took Geometry, Biology, and Advanced English. While these courses didn't boost my grade point average, they set me on the course for AP classes, which I needed to take to get into top tier colleges (University of California at Berkeley, for example) down the road.

Sophomore year I had my first AP/Honors class, Honors Algebra Two. I had Geometry Freshman year and Algebra Honors Two with Mrs. Schumacher. Her class was one of the stricter classes that I had in high school, but I found her teaching method very successful in teaching me the material. I also took Accelerated Spanish Two and Accelerated English class. My English class was taught by Dr. Berry as opposed to Mr. Scharfen. The class dealt heavily with philosophy, which I found to be fascinating. Beginning with the ancient greek philosophers such as the Epicureans and Stoics, and moving through the ages to the likes of Thoreau and Descartes.

That was one of my favorite classes, and I presume that some college classes will adopt a similar Socratic method.

Another important aspect of my education were leadership groups, or class councils. I was class president in eighth grade, and I wanted to continue my involvement in leadership. Freshman year I was active with Newman's Safe School Ambassadors(SSA). The following year I was Sophomore Class Treasurer. As a Junior I decided to run for the position of class president, and managed to obtain the majority of votes. The Junior class council was in charge of, among other events, planning and publicizing the Prom. As President I led our meetings and offered my own opinions to the council. This experience allowed me to hone my leadership and public speaking skills.

With Junior year also came a heavy class load, as well as SAT and ACT testing. My classes consisted of AP English, AP Physics, AP U.S. History, and Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus Honors. While the workload was at times a burden, I enjoyed all of my classes and teachers. I felt all of my AP classes well prepared me for the exams, and I received at least a 3 on the three Exams.

As a Senior began to feel not only like a leader of my class, but of the entire school as well. This was heightened by my role as Team Captain of the Varsity Basketball Team, which consisted of players from every class, freshman to senior. I am also a member of the school's Associated Student Body, or ASB. I consider this role very important to my high school experience because I believe it prepares me for future jobs in which working with colleagues and being able to collaborate and compromise is critical

My AP classes in senior year were much more difficult, on average, than those I took last year. The two I found most difficult were AP Bio, which was difficult due to the vast amount of information that Biology came with, and AP Macroeconomics. Econ was only a semester long class, which means there was a lot of information in not a lot of time. The class was taught by Mr. Bonfigli, who was also my basketball coach. While his class is molded so that the majority of the curriculum was composed of reading the book and being quizzed on the material. This class, however, worked to my strengths, as classes that did not entertain the possibility of losing homework and instead focussed on testing the student's knowledge (such as chemistry) were my most successful ones.

When it came to applying for college, I went in with a lot of confidence. I applied to ten colleges, with varying degrees of difficulty. I probably had only one safety school: Oregon. I had five schools of a moderate degree of difficulty to get into, including Santa Clara, CalPoly, and UC Diego and Davis. Then I had four top tier schools: UC Berkeley, Stanford, Brown, and Columbia. My expectation was that I would be accepted to my safety school, most likely all of the moderate schools, and at least one of the top tier schools. I was especially hopeful the Berkeley would accept me. Unfortunately, I was accepted into none of what I considered top tier colleges. I was pretty disappointed. I had decided with my parents that we would not pay for a personal college advisor. I had written most of my essays with little help or oversight. My grades and SAT/ACT scores were still strong, so it did come as a bit of a shock.

Thankfully, I applied and got accepted into other great schools. As of now, I am deciding between Santa Clara University and UC Davis. I am leaning towards Davis at this time.

Looking back at my education thus far, what stands out are the relationships and friends that I made along the journey. The memories that I made with these friends have complemented my learning, and have made it a positive and memorable experience. I don't yet know for certain how prepared I am for college, as I have yet to experience it. However, I am confident that it won't be anything that I can't handle. I have a great education behind me, and great friends beside me. Allons-y.