

When contemplating a career, my initial priority was to envision a career that not only defined my professional life, but also informed and influenced my personal life as well. As a first year undergraduate student, I knew that my passion for literature and the English language was strong as well as my enthusiasm for human connection, conversation and continuous learning. Through these observations, it became obvious that it was not only my career aspiration but also my dream and vocation to become an English teacher. The comfort and sense of belonging I felt as a student in my many English classes further prompted my motivation to someday be in the position of the exemplary instructors with which I had the opportunity to work and learn. My excitement for literature originated the first time I opened Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* in my 7<sup>th</sup> grade history class. It was fitting that this was the first novel I taught in the fall of 2013, my very first semester teaching, where I was able to inspire my own students to connect with the story just as I did many years ago. This experience illustrated that I love being a student just as much as being a teacher, and I look forward to continuing my education to better future student's learning and myself as an educator.

Currently, I am in my first year of teaching and the experience is exactly how my mentors and fellow teachers described it: a rollercoaster. Rollercoasters have their ups, downs, upside downs, free falls, peaks, and most of all; they have their unknown twists and turns. Growing up, rollercoasters thrilled me. I loved the way they surprise you with a quick drop and throw you through loops at the blink of an eye. As an adult, I work in a classroom full of 16-year-old sophomores where I encounter a wildly entertaining ride very similar to the rollercoaster experience. It is not only my student's age and the emotional ups and downs that keep me on my toes, but also the additional detail that makes my classes and students unique. For many of my students, the English language is a challenge due to the fact that 98 percent of my school's population is comprised of English Language Learners. Working with Hispanic

students, where Spanish is their primary language, has opened up a perspective of teaching English that I never thought I'd be a part of, especially as a first year teacher who made the decision to study Latin in high school and college over Spanish.

In recent weeks, I have finished grading my student's first round of formal papers where they wrote a five-paragraph essay about how they are "witnesses to history" inspired by writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. The students' goal was to tell a story that they witnessed or experienced and felt strongly about sharing with others, similar to how Elie felt an obligation to share his experience at Auschwitz and other camps in *Night*. Elie's diction in *Night* provided readers with the opportunity to imagine what he went through. Just as my Advanced Composition professor taught me, I encouraged my own students to show their experience through the use of descriptive language. This particular assignment demanded that I scaffold every sentence, and, although it took three weeks of in class work time, it was a success. Each student was able to approach the writing process step by step combating the overwhelming experience of formal writing combined with the challenge of English as a second language. Ultimately, students took pride in expressing their own story and began to appreciate the purpose of the writing process.

As a teacher, this assignment allowed me the opportunity to connect with my students on a different level. Working with inner city students in Milwaukee, I have learned that it takes time for students to trust the adults around them. My students' "witness to history" papers exemplified this statement. Before the final drafts were turned in, I took a risk and read my own story to the class about something personal that I witnessed and experienced. Showing this trust to my students allowed them to open up more freely with their own writing. I am a witness to history because I am actively witnessing the progress made in the relationships built between my students and I and the trust they have gracefully given to me.

It is my goal to continue my education as an English teacher at Teachers College. I have chosen INSTEP specifically because the program encourages learning through different perspectives. I aim to use my Teachers College education to influence the many students I will reach as a teacher. I currently hold a degree in Secondary Education and English from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I desire to attain my Masters of Arts Degree in Teaching of English. I believe Columbia University's INSTEP program will give me the opportunity to reach my goal and eventually obtain a Ph.D. to teach higher education. INSTEP is an ideal program for me because of the extensive classes in Reading, Writing, language arts and humanities in the classroom combined with workshops and cultural programs throughout New York City. In addition, INSTEP will allow me to continue with my professional career and move forward academically at the same time. With this benefit, I will be able to actively integrate my experiences from the previous summer into the following school year.

Knowledge is acquired through engagement with the world and people with different perspectives and paths of life. For this reason, I look forward to learning from Columbia University educators as well as fellow INSTEP students. I believe that my dedication to education and enthusiasm for culture and learning are what make me a perfect fit and asset to Columbia University's Teachers College INSTEP program. I strive every day to improve myself just as I encourage my students to do the same. I know that Columbia's Teachers College will help me reach my goal of becoming a stronger English teacher and forever change my outlook on education as a whole. I appreciate your consideration and thank you for taking the time to review my application for acceptance into Teachers College INSTEP at Columbia University.

It is my goal to use my Teachers College education from Columbia University in order to enrich my current and future student's learning of English. Currently, my school is in the application process of becoming an International Baccalaureate school. The head of the English

department and I have created a new curriculum for our students that is aimed to strengthen their understanding of the world they live in. Our curriculum will teach students to be reflective of their work and actions, knowledgeable about current and past events, balanced in their academic, personal and social lives, as well as open minded towards cultures and ideas different than their own. Teaching through the International Baccalaureate learner profiles will create a well rounded student and person who will thrive in his or her future endeavors. I am committed to my career as an English teacher and my passion grows stronger each day I am in the classroom. I strive to educate myself so that I can grow in order to cultivate the growing minds I encounter everyday.