

Autobiographical Reflective Paper

Madison Gilbert (200466153)

Faculty of Education - University of Regina

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Cori Saas

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I was born genetically hard-wired to love the arts. My mother was the lead singer in a country band; who swears she was a spanish dancer in a past life, as well as our town's Visual Arts teacher, and my father being a lover of country and 80's rock music. When I look back at old family home videos of our everyday life, there's rarely ever a memory of us without music and dance. So it comes to no surprise to me, or those who know me, that I would choose to pursue a career as a Performing Arts teacher.

For me it was never a guessing game, or some tough decision about what I would grow up to be outside of the parameters of our small town. I have known that I wanted to be a musical theatre performer since my first musical I saw at the TCU building as a young child. Growing up I took competitive dance lessons, singing and theory lessons outside of my public school hours, with summer camps at the University of Saskatchewan Drama, as well as was involved yearly in our high school's drama productions (also directed by my mom). I knew what I wanted to do, and I was driven to do it.

In December, I graduated from Randolph College for the Performing Arts in Toronto, Ontario, where I studied and practiced my singing, dancing, and acting skills every day for two years, until my online graduation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet no matter how sure I was about my love for performing, there was always an equally strong passion for teaching the arts in a classroom. I've always wanted to stand up in front of a room full of students, and show them that there are career possibilities in the arts, and that they're just as accessible as any other career path. I knew what it felt like as someone who loved the arts so fiercely, to constantly have to validate and defend its importance to my peers and extended family. So when the opportunity arose for me to be able to get my teaching degree while back home waiting out the pandemic,

and with the musical theatre industry being on pause due to it, I knew I couldn't pass up the opportunity to prepare for my future as a classroom teacher.

I was fortunate enough to be able to grow up taking part in my mothers art classes from the grades seven to twelve, although there were days that I may have not felt that way. It wasn't easy being a teacher's kid in a small town; I always had to be on my best behaviour at school, unless I was on death's bed I was in attendance, and any or all gossip pertaining to my friends and I were common knowledge upon the staff and rest of the student body. I felt that I had a high bar to meet and many eyes observing me at all times. This was also challenging for my peers to accept in junior high. However, it gave me an inside perspective to the scope of this career, but also how rewarding it was. The hours and stress that goes into marking, the care and love they put into every student, the extra miles they go if it means it could positively affect a students life, and the passion they bring into the classroom - even on the hard days. I've seen first hand how some teachers are disrespected and treated by kids who could care less to be there, but I've also seen the patience and grace in which they handle those situations. It is an inspiring, and too often a thankless job, and being raised to see it behind the scenes was eye opening. But all the while, I also saw the kids who took the time to thank my mom and other teachers. Those who reached out to them when they felt that there was nowhere else to turn, and how inspirational a teacher can be in one's life. In fact, they can be responsible for shaping other's futures, or believing in the student until the student learns to believe in his/her self.

If I can bring even half of the passion and fun that my mother did into my own classroom, I know that I could positively change the way some students see the arts. I understand that there will still be kids who don't want to be there anyways, and that's not a reflection on me as a teacher, but on their views and priorities. All I can do is to try my best to

make my art classes a fun, informative, positive experience for those who open up enough to really try to immerse themselves into that atmosphere. I hope to make my classroom a space of acceptance, where students feel safe to openly express themselves in their truest and most vulnerable form, because that's what being an artist means. I want to teach with the dignity, confidence and grace of those before me who I was lucky enough to learn from. There are few careers in the world as rewarding as being a teacher, and I cannot wait to be able to begin my new journey on this path.