

A young girl walks into a new classroom: large, colorful, and full of life. At five years old she did not realize this room would be the beginning of a lifelong journey. Her teacher hugged her and expressed the joy she had to have this girl in her preschool class. This child found inspiration in her teacher's enthusiasm and compassion; from that day forward, she would want to be a teacher herself every day for the rest of her life. Right now, she sits, typing this story in complete awe of who she was only eighteen years earlier. My passion for teaching has not yet wavered since that first day of school and stands stronger today than it ever has. I love helping people and I aspire to make a difference in this world. I believe that teaching quenches this aspiration – as teachers mold future engineers, business executives, presidents, and leaders, but, most importantly, they mold character. This passion to teach has molded my past, shapes my present, and will carry through the rest of my life.

Education has always played a major role in my life and I cannot imagine myself without it. As one of my greatest passions, I know that having access to a fair and equitable education leads to the success of future generations and their contributions to the world. This passion stems from my own experiences as a low-income, first generation student. In the sixth grade my father experienced a tragic accident which left our family bankrupt and living below the poverty line. As a result of this financial struggle, my incredibly supportive parents enrolled my siblings and I in a program called Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP).

GEAR UP has played a tremendous role in my current success and my future dreams. In middle school and high school, the program pushed me to succeed in school through free tutoring, college trips, and jobsite visits. These opportunities opened my eyes to a world where lifetime education wasn't simply a dream: it became a tangible goal. GEAR UP has fueled my passion to pursue a life which provides students with lifetime education, as GEAR UP provided me.

These experiences have brought me to the present: a young woman studying to become a language teacher, either of Spanish or of English. I often hear that most undergraduates

change their majors at least twice before graduation; however, this was never the case for me. My dream of becoming a teacher has been woven into my life from the moment I walked into that preschool classroom. I study Spanish Education to give future generations the passion for learning that I developed as an adolescent.

During my undergraduate career, this passion for education has manifested in many ways. During my first two years of college, I tutored high school GEAR UP students in Laramie to provide them with the same resources that I received. During my semester abroad in Salamanca, Spain I served as a teacher's aide at a local English academy to provide students with the language literacy skills for which I am most passionate. This passion now manifests itself through my job at the Education Abroad office and my ambassadorship with AIFS where we encourage undergraduates to study abroad during their time at the University of Wyoming. In these positions, I have learned that education is not something that needs to occur solely within the four walls of a classroom. I work with students who have had life-changing experiences from their time abroad and it warms my heart to know that, through support like mine, their education abroad experience has given them newfound passion.

My desire to teach and further the education of others, though, will not end when I receive my diploma next year. I aspire to integrate education into the rest of my life as a teacher of languages. I know that language literacy is an important skill to have in a continually globalizing world. Because of this, I want to travel the world to teach English as a second language to underserved communities where English literacy is an invaluable skill to possess. This aspiration begins this coming summer through a volunteer trip to a rural community in Ecuador where I will work to create a curriculum with a local professor to teach young children English. The goal of this project is to provide young students in a local mining community – where the mines have since closed – with the opportunity to diversify their skills and prosper in an ever-globalizing world.

Further, I plan to apply for the Peace Corps in Ecuador after graduation to be an English teacher and trainer in local communities for two or more years. During this time, I will

receive the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification to bring back with me to the United States. After this, I am not sure where my aspirations will take me. However, I do know that I will dedicate my life to providing students with the same education that inspired me to pursue this path. I hope to encourage the youth of America – English-speaking or otherwise – to pursue language literacy through obtaining more than one language, be it English or Spanish.

Education will forever be woven into my life by the strong passion I developed as a child. I am happy that my past experiences have led me to where I stand today and that they continue to pave a path guided by my passion for education and literacy. I know that if today I were to meet the young Kaitlyn who found a desire to teach in preschool, she would be ecstatic and proud. I will continue to live my life aspiring to be the version of myself I have always wanted to be: a teacher dedicated to lifelong education.