

Personal Exposure & Experience Life Reflection

As a kid I grew up in Portland, Oregon. It's no secret that the Pacific Northwest has some of the most beautiful nature in the world. Even in my own backyard we had twenty birch trees, and three of my favorite flowering bushes, the rhododendron. I remember one having white flowers, which would bloom first, then the light pink, and finally the red (which was the prettiest in my opinion). Growing up with so much flora around me made me very aware of the natural world. Additionally, one of my favorite camps to attend was, "Zoo Camp", where my parents dropped my little sister and me off at the Oregon Zoo, and we spent the whole day learning about animals. Zoo Camp was not just the highlight of my summer, but also the whole year. Animals held a special place in my heart and still do.

Inside school, recycling was always emphasized as an important sustainability concept. Even composting was made a priority in my elementary school after I was a few years past kindergarten. We would celebrate Earth Day in small ways, but I feel like my passion for the environment grew significantly in high school. My awareness of nature, love of hiking, and enjoyment of animals helped me see how the environment was struggling, and it sparked frustration in me like no other subject in school. It became hard for me to understand why my classmates didn't see this in the same way, and it drove me to my school major.

Clarity of Direction

I always loved science units when I was younger, and once we started to have actual science classes in middle school, they were by far my favorite over all other subjects. After taking several Earth sciences classes in high school, I knew that studying environmental science and how we can help our planet was my calling. With sustainability driving my interests, it became clear that I had to do my part, and an ESS major, not only am I educating myself on the struggles of our planet, but also how to mitigate and in learning how to work with others to solve them, was my way to do so. The ways that we can help as a species and as individuals are becoming more and more clear to me as I continue my path through ESS. I almost never have second thoughts about my major. The only times I do are when I feel unprepared or overwhelmed by classes. However, my love for the subject has never wavered and I'm proud of myself for persevering.

Eureka Moment

I know that I will always love science as a subject, but working at a summer camp in the woods changed the way I looked at my future career. I worked as a camp counselor just outside Yosemite National Park in California and my love for working with kids grew astronomically. The connections I was able to build with little eight-year-olds all the way to high school aged students surprised me. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had in my life. Going into it, I knew I would enjoy the summer but teaching kids and adolescents and acting as role model for them made me incredibly happy and I felt at peace. The way that I saw my impact on each individual camper made me realize how much I can change the lives of children in a positive way. But with the reminder of my love of ecosystem science and sustainability in the back of my mind, the idea of teaching formed as a future career in the forefront of my brain. I could teach the very earth science classes that created my love for our earth and the natural

world. I hope to share my passion for sustainability and spread awareness about climate change while changing the lives of kids that I love so dearly.

Looking Ahead

Teaching kids how to care for our planet will combine the reward I feel from working with children and allow me to educate others on how to act sustainably. While I know not every child will have the same passion for science that I do, I hope to at least convey the importance of understanding our world and what we must do to help save it. The biologist and prolific writer and presenter, David Attenborough, once said, “If children don’t grow up knowing about nature and appreciating it, they will not understand it. And if they don’t understand it, they won’t protect it.” A career as a teacher will allow me to help kids learn about our natural world, and hopefully I can be the one to spark an appreciation for it in them. An impact like that can last a lifetime, as it has for me. With understanding and appreciation of our Earth hopefully will also come motivation to protect it which is exactly what we need as a species right now. As a science teacher I know I will feel fulfilled because of this impact. I believe money doesn’t buy happiness; experiences do. And with the experience of teaching, I feel I will be content in my career and life with certainty.