After two years of teaching in urban Baltimore as a Teach For America corps member, the day I most dreaded was the day in which I had to explain to my students that I was leaving to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor.  I worried that they would think I was deserting them, as so many had before.  But just as they had done every day in my classroom, my students surprised me.  Kayla, a student I had worked with for two years, told me it was my turn to follow my dreams as I had encouraged her each day to follow hers.   
  
My dream has long been to be a doctor.  I was pre-admitted to medical school as a high school senior, and had plans of going straight into medical school like so many of my classmates.  But as I entered my senior year of college, I learned about the educational inequalities in our country and decided that I could not ignore them.  I decided I could do more good for the children of today, as well as my patients of the future, if I deferred my medical school acceptance for two years to join the movement to end educational inequality.   
  
I am from suburban St. Louis, attended school in a great district, and had all the advantages in life that came along with such an upbringing.  Dreams could become realities for me.  Being a teacher in an inner city school opened my eyes to the disparities that exist in our world.  I realized many of the dreams I had as a student were not feasible for most of my students.  My experiences working in a broken system and witnessing the struggles my students faced fueled a fire in me to never give up the fight to end inequalities.     
  
Teaching changed my vision for what kind of doctor I want to be.  Not only do I want to be an outstanding and compassionate physician, I want to be a doctor who dedicates her career to helping the underserved.  I realize I will never be satisfied with my work if I am not searching for solutions to social injustices.  Just as I worked to close the achievement gap in education, I similarly want to work to close the gaps that exist in healthcare.     
  
My passion for working with underserved populations led me to become a director of our student-run free health clinic, MedZou, in my first year of medical school. My work at MedZou over the last four years as director, volunteer, and now student advisor, lead me to choose a career in family medicine.  MedZou not only offered me an opportunity to gain greater understanding of the problems facing the uninsured and the skills to handle many of these challenging situations, but it was also at this clinic that I realized I truly enjoy the variety of patient concerns and the complexity of situations that is commonplace to a family physician.  What I love most about family medicine is that I still get to be a teacher every day.   I am just as excited when a patient leaves the encounter with the confidence to manage the treatment plan as I was when my students left a lesson mastering a skill.   Teaching my patients, and by doing so, empowering them with the knowledge and tools to live healthy lives, is why I want to be a family physician.  Working on a team with the patient, their family, and other health care professionals to help each patient achieve his or her goals in disease management is exactly how I envision practicing family medicine someday.   
  
On challenging days, I will think of my students.  I will think of the promise I made, to them and myself, to end the inequalities they have to face.  I know my calling in life is to be a family physician, someone who will go anywhere she is needed, to create change and make the health care access and quality chasm shrink toward nothing.  I want to be a family physician because it is this specialty that will give me the skills and knowledge to help me follow this dream, just as Kayla encouraged me to do.