

Dear Hiring Committee,

Thank you for your consideration and this opportunity to tell you about myself. I am a high school English teacher with almost two decades of experience. When I enter into my work with students, I am guided by the assumption that our authentic dialogue and inquiry into and through and with texts will best engage their growth. The Constructivist philosophy speaks to me, and I am a faithful student of classic and modern intellectuals in this field to further my own education and strengthen my daily work in the classroom.

I was born and raised in Santa Monica, California, and attended public schools there. From an early age, I tutored neighborhood kids in various subjects and on various projects. After college, I returned home and began to work with some of my teachers at my elementary school. I took two different jobs there — one as an assistant to the speech pathologist, and a second as a summer enrichment teacher in a class I developed that taught a hands-on approach to the convergence of music and literature.

I grew up in a house of teaching. My mother was a first grade teacher for decades and continues now in her ‘retirement’ as a substitute teacher in the Santa Monica public schools. My father was a self-taught tinkerer, fixer, and businessman who found success in many of his endeavors.

And so it was, that at the ripe age of 23 that one of my most influential high school teachers called to inform me that the California government had put aside money to hire emergency credentialed teachers for ninth grade English and to lower the class size to 20 students per teacher. I submitted an application, had an interview, taught a demo lesson, and was hired. I simultaneously enrolled in a Masters and credential program, and was on my way.

The first seven years of my career at Santa Monica High School, my alma mater, were huge in my development as a teacher, and had profound effects on how I saw myself in relationship to my students in connection to text, the work, the trajectory of their high school careers, as well as the intangible workings of their souls that would walk through the doors each day.

I was fortunate enough to work with some master teachers who, now as colleagues, were once my classroom teachers, and I had an even greater fortune to work with two transformative leaders in Superintendent Neil Schmidt and High School Principal Sylvia Rousseau. Together, they led the entire school through hard-hitting work that never shied away from the toughest of discussions about how the dynamics of our classrooms were consciously and unconsciously fueled by issues of race, gender, socioeconomics, prejudice, and politics. These ongoing dialogues and explorations with faculty were all guided by powerful texts from John Ogbu, Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and others.

Combined with my Masters and credential program studies, and the intensity and importance of the work happening both with the faculty of Santa Monica High School and also with my students, I began to tackle larger social action issues, such as working to develop methods and access pathways for more representation of minority students in Honors and Advanced Placement courses. I also helped to formally create a course to shepherd some of our lowest performing students through their painful struggles as the 'academic underclass' at the school. And then, those two ideas merged into one larger creative enterprise, as I was inspired to call upon my skills as a musician and writer to help pull into the center the unheard voices of student artists. Thus was born the school's first student-run radio station. Within all of this work were also my continued efforts to further challenge the students ready for upper level thinking, texts, and compositions; the differentiated classroom is a busy and beautiful place.

I kept going. I developed new University of California approved courses for twelfth grade English students and also developed the school's first Internet environment English course. Further, I developed the school's first Web Design course open to all levels. I became clearer and clearer in these years that my true work and true philosophy in an educational institution was always to seek out new nexus points where I could meet students and help teach, coach, nurture, and inspire them to move far beyond where we first met.

After seven fulfilling years at SAMOHI, my wife and I adopted our son, and the next two years of my life were spent at home as primary caregiver. As you might imagine, I learned a tremendous amount about people and education and growth all in a condensed time period. My penchant for spontaneity and finding the intellectual value of a moment were constantly in use while I nurtured and loved and cared for our child. Parenthood is an incredible teacher.

When it came time for me to swap places with my wife, go back to the work force, and have her stay home for as long as we could financially afford, I had developed a new awareness of what I wanted out of the classroom within the political landscape of Education. After deep reflection, I made the difficult choice not to return to Santa Monica High School, which, in my time away, had changed leadership and shifted focus from much of our earlier work. I interviewed at a number of local schools that had openings, taught sample lessons, discussed pedagogy and philosophy with school directors, and found the next important phase of my career at New Roads School in Santa Monica.

It was here that my innovations, my spontaneity, my intellectual pursuits, and my creativity all merged to form an amazing ten years of service to the school. With encouragement and support for faculty's academic freedom, I thrived and continue to thrive. I have been successful in many ways at this school, and so many of my students come back to visit and tell me of their own successes in college and beyond. The community of New Roads School is rich, diverse, and exciting. I have been pushed by the

artistic and academic pursuits of my students to think and rethink again everything in which we engage. Together, my students and I experiment with ideas, with space, with time, and with curriculum. We do really work together in ways that have pushed me and changed me, and I know that this is true for them.

My search is not yet done. I don't know if New Roads School is going to be my final resting stop in what I hope to be at least another 30 years of work in the classroom. Sometimes I dream about a new city or a new school or a new rhythm. I am a dedicated and loyal employee, and I am also a big thinker. So here I am opening doors and windows of possibility by reaching out to you. I know that I want a creative, diverse, progressive school in which to work and continue to develop what I have been working on for my entire life. I am interested in finding out if you and I are right for each other.

Thank you for reading this and I look forward to hearing from you should you consider me an appropriate fit for your school.

Thank you,  
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