

The Underdog

“I want to be a great teacher; the teacher whose class students feel challenged in, but look forward to. I want to create a fun learning environment that doesn’t even feel like school, because they are too busy discovering the world like they have never seen before. I am confident that the Master’s program at MSU will prepare me to be that teacher...I want to be Miss Brooke again...”

I am proud to say that two years later I am that teacher, and MSU helped me get here, just as I knew it would. My original goal was to play major catch up and become as good of a teacher in two years as others have in four or more. I didn’t know I wanted to teach until about two years ago when I made a career switch from non-profit work with low-income youth (where I was also Miss Brooke) into teaching. I was hesitant to start the Master’s program because everyone else was entering with at least a few years of experience under their belts and their own classrooms. I, on the other hand, was entering with three years of experience in my own after school program, but hadn’t even been accepted into a position at the American School in Mexico City (ASF) as a Teacher’s Assistant (TA) in Kindergarten. I was the underdog and was extremely nervous, but determined to make up for lost time by drawing on my strengths from my degree in International Studies- Political Science and my passion for working with youth.

Thankfully, I did get the job as a TA in Kindergarten and was able to apply my learning from my class about teaching children with challenging behaviors to one special student, but I was not meant for Kindergarten. I knew I was meant to teach, just not that age group. I had my hopes set on being a middle school Language Arts and Social Studies teacher and I was making my way up. The following year I was hired in the elementary school and worked this past year as the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for first, third, and fifth grade. I was halfway through my Masters at MSU and had the freedom to apply what I was learning in my teaching.

I chose to focus on Literacy in my MAED to better prepare me as a Language Arts teacher, but I challenged myself by coupling it with Technology. ASF is a technology driven school and every student as well as classroom has top of the line new gadgets. I knew I needed to jump on the wagon if I was going to succeed in this school.

With regards to literacy, the classes I took on children’s literature and how to teach and assess writing helped me greatly to plan interesting lessons and assist students. My creativity class as well as my class on the nature and design of compelling experiences allowed me to engage my students and left them wanting for more. My technology courses quelled my fears about iMovie and website design and made me much cooler in the eyes of the kids. The combination of classes, from literacy to technology, made me into the dynamic, fun teacher I wanted to be.

I remember seeking guidance from a PhD student, who was my TA, at the start of my very first class at MSU. I was panicking that I had bitten off more than I could chew once I saw the syllabus. My TA closed with, “Your determination is inspiring! I am certain that you will succeed.” As pretentious as it sounds, I have succeeded. My students enjoyed my class and look to me with smiles all asking at once, “Miss Brooke! What are we going to do today?!” I provide tutoring classes outside of school and somehow

my number has reached across schools and the city. Most importantly, I know I made the right career switch and I love my job. I love hearing, "Miss Brooke!" yelled happily down the hall coming from the fifth grade boys who stopped being *too cool* long enough to call out a joyous hello. I love being Miss Brooke.