Liberal Arts Education: Helping Student Prepare For All Aspects of Teaching

Manchester College has given me the opportunity to experience classes that require me to think and venture outside my comfort zone. Manchester College is a liberal arts college where students are required to enroll in classes that deal with topics such as different cultures, religions, works of literature, and the arts. Because I have attended Manchester College, many aspects of my life have changed. These changes have happened because of the requirement to take classes that are not education classes. I have found it necessary to change my views and thoughts about people and their cultures. As a result, I have learned to give greater respect, to be more open-minded, and to appreciate differences between people and things which will allow me to be a better teacher.

When I enrolled in Manchester College, I was not aware of the Mission Statement which discusses the school’s value of education, especially a liberal education. The Mission Statement states, “Manchester College is an independent, co-educational college in the liberal arts tradition, affiliated with the Church of the Brethren. It is committed to being a community of faith and learning” (7). It goes on to say, “the educational program combines liberal education, career preparation, and education for service, while fostering a desire to improve the quality of life” (7). I now understand why I was required to take all the courses that at the time seemed of no value to myself. When I was enrolled in Experiencing the Art, I thought that it was a waste of my time. We discussed different artists, time periods, and the value of art. Learning about these things made me realize that art is very important to many people and cultures. I did not understand
important it is to people until I took the class. I value other things in my life that are important to me and would be very hurt if someone thought these things were a waste of time. I have learned that I need to respect others and their values because although it might not be that important to me, it is to them.

Looking back at the courses I have taken that have been based on religion, cultures, art, or literature, I can see how important they were to helping me become a “well-rounded” person. The classes gave me the opportunity to learn about things that I had no knowledge of previously. For example, when I had to sign up for Philosophy, I knew that I would not enjoy the class very much. Learning about different philosophers and their beliefs made me realize that the knowledge I was going was going to help in the future. I would have some background of philosophy and because of that, I was going to be able to talk about the subject knowledgeably. I was “open-minded” about the concepts we were learning about, although I didn’t believe some of them, I was given the chance to learn information from a nonbiased perspective and then form my own views on the topic. I learned how to see both sides and then form my own views on this matter, which is going to help me in the future. As a teacher, I will be able to see both sides of situations and then form an opinion, rather than being biased. Looking back, I realize that I learned so much in that class, not just about Philosophy, but that I have to be open-minded and listen to others’ views before I make my own.

Also, obtaining a liberal arts education has allowed me to see different perspectives of things and has given me the opportunity to appreciate the differences between people and things. The material that is presented in classes that I have had to is not influenced by someone’s values. Both sides of every story are presented and this
allows students the chance to see the situation from every angle. I believe that because of these types of classes, I am less likely to judge someone because of their cultures and values. I am more likely to listen and to hear their values without passing judgment upon them. I have also been given the chance to appreciate the difference in people. This will greatly help me as a teacher because I will have students in my class that come from different cultures, race, religion, etc. and I am going to be open and willing to listen to these students which in turn, will have an effect on the education they receive.

When I have finished my college career, I will have a degree from Manchester College, one that has required me to take classes that are outside my comfort zone. Getting this type of degree has led me to build a foundation that will carry on to my future teaching. I am able to give great respect to people, I am open-minded, and I appreciate the differences in between people. Because Manchester College has allowed me to obtain a liberal arts education, I will be a better teacher with the foundation I have been granted.