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### Liberal Arts Reflection

According to the *Association of American Colleges and Universities*, a liberal arts education is “an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with the broad knowledge of the wider world as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest.” (www.aacu.org). I believe that the liberal arts education I have received at Manchester College has provided me a well rounded education that has prepared me for my future career. Not only did I gain the necessary skills in my content area, I can now pull different facts and skills from different contents and incorporate them into my classroom as well. By being exposed to different content areas and different ways of thinking, I think that I can create a diverse classroom environment and use interdisciplinary skills.

Many of the classes I have taken at Manchester College, I would have never thought to take if I had not been required to take them. Even though I would probably have never taken them on my own, I have found many of these courses to be very beneficial. I appreciate that the liberal arts education I have received at Manchester has exposed me to different experiences and forced me to take a look at different contents. During my four years at Manchester College, I have taken two courses over popular culture and film. I think these two classes were extremely beneficial for my classroom

and my teaching style. As an English teacher, one skill that I will have to teach my students is to not only analyze text, but analyze film as well. My background knowledge of analyzing film has really helped me when I have been trying to teach my students. If I was not exposed to those two classes, I feel that I would have a much harder time trying to work this skill into my classroom.

Another aspect I like to incorporate into my classroom is history. I have always felt that history and English go hand in hand. In order to help my students think about context, I like to bring in historical context, such as discussing the time period the short story or novel was written in. I have incorporated historical context in many of my lesson plans, especially during my Science Fiction unit. I have taken many different history classes during my time at Manchester College, and without this background knowledge, I would not be able to work historical context into my lessons.

Not only has a liberal arts education enhanced my classroom experiences, but it has also helped me expand my thinking in many different areas, such as women's rights and feminism. I was fortunate enough to be able to enroll in the "Feminist Theory" course during the spring of my junior year. I have always had an interest in feminism, but it was this class that truly helped me expand my knowledge and thought process of the subject. Manchester College was the place where I first heard a feminist speaker. During my first year of college, Jessica Valenti, a feminist author, came to speak on campus. It was at this moment where I could finally put a name to how I have felt most of my life. During "Feminist Theory" I was able to expand my knowledge and grow as a feminist throughout the semester. I feel that at other colleges and universities, I would not have been able to have that experience. At other schools, students tend to focus on

their content area and do not deviate from their set path. At Manchester, I have been given the option to expand my interests and gain an understanding at different contents. I think that if I had gone to a different school, I would have not had the time or the dedication to take other classes in different subject areas. I appreciate Manchester College and my liberal arts education for that reason.

Another positive aspect a liberal arts education has brought into my life is the opportunity to obtain a diverse education and experience. I come from a town that is not very diverse. I knew very little about other cultures before I went to college. I believe that a liberal arts education has brought more diversity into my life. I now know about many other cultures and ways of thinking because of the classes I have taken. I have even been exposed to different literature about a plethora of cultures. Through two classes, “World Literature” and “South Asian Literature,” I have read about different cultures and can incorporate these cultures into my classroom. I believe that students should be exposed to other cultures and beliefs. Many students have a limited knowledge base on other cultures and traditions, and I want to be able to expose them to worldly views. I have already thought about many different novels I could bring into the classroom, such as The Red Scarf Girl, a memoir about a young girl’s childhood during the Revolution of China. I want my students to have an understanding and even an appreciation for different cultures, and I believe I can help them achieve that through my liberal arts education.

Through the ups and downs of my education, I have had a wonderful experience overall. The classes I have taken have truly prepared me for my own classroom one day. I can take the subjects I have learned during my college career and mold them into an

open, welcoming classroom environment. I want my students to not only have an appreciation for English, but have an appreciation for history and different cultures as well. I want to have an open-minded classroom, one where students can discuss different topics freely and openly. I believe that my liberal arts education has been a very positive educational experience, and will help me with my career choice and my teaching career my whole life.