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Liberal Arts Paper

A dictionary definition of liberal arts is, the academic course of instruction at a college intended to provide general knowledge and comprising the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, as opposed to professional or technical subjects. One thing that many students worry about when attending Manchester College is all the general education requirements there are. At a liberal arts college, we as students are exposed to many different subjects outside of our major. As an education major I have taken classes in psychology, sociology, philosophy, music, art, and history. Why should students have to spend time on these extra subjects? Do they not have enough time spent within their major classes? The decision to attend a liberal arts college is one of many good decisions I have made in life so far. Liberal arts give a person the chance to expand their knowledge and thinking strategies outside of their elected major of study. The liberal arts curriculum at Manchester College has improved my education greatly. I have learned how to think, how to learn, how to see things as a whole, and how to become a better teacher.

My thinking has changed greatly since high school. I grew up believing the way I did and nothing was changing my opinion. I have seen first hand how an opinion can change through experience. In my Philosophy of Civilizations class we discussed some government issues that I was unfamiliar with. I realized that to make a good argument, you should be well informed. I formed my opinion from my parents when I was young and never looked toward outside

resources. This class allowed me to see the rest of the world's views, and I formed a new opinion toward certain matters. I have had the chance to see the outside world and become more informed. The more informed I am, the more I am able to participate in discussion of any subject and offer my opinion and be able to back it up.

The liberal arts have also taught me how to learn. Knowledge builds upon knowledge and that is the basis of a liberal arts curriculum. Through the liberal arts, I have been able to learn how to study different information and build upon it in the future. A school can not teach us everything we need to know in four years. A liberal arts college teaches you the basic information and teaches you how to build upon that in the years to come. Having knowledge about other subject areas can also enhance creativity. The projects you do for your major will be more appealing if you are able to incorporate other areas into them.

The liberal arts education also shows me how to see things as a whole. Through many of my liberal arts classes, we have examined the diversity within our nation and society. We have a wide variety of cultures that live here. I have been able to change my view to see how everyone fits together and not separately. I have been informed of different events around the world that affect me in the United States that I did not know about before. In African History, I have learned about the genocides that the Africans have been through and it makes me feel grateful to have been born and raised here in the United States. Here at Manchester College, I have been able to take history classes outside of American History. Along with African History, I have taken World Musics. This class taught me the beginning of music and how it has developed in different cultures to the modern music we have today. When you know the background of something you love, and how it developed, you become more appreciative of it. When we gain knowledge from other areas, we learn to look at things from the perspective of the world and not

just ourselves. This provides a greater insight into learning.

Liberal arts have helped me become a better teacher in many ways. I will be able to take the knowledge from other areas and apply it to my teaching. My students will be able to gain the knowledge from me to build upon throughout their lives. I was required to attend a Celebrating Diversity Workshop here at the college. During this workshop, my eyes were open to the many issues of diversity. We dealt with diversity of race, gender, physical characteristics, and cultural diversity. I was able to see many of the racial slurs that I had not realized before and how to handle them if I encountered one on a daily basis. I will be able to handle these slurs in my classroom and show my students how people feel when they are said. I never realized till this workshop how serious this problem was. It is important for children to learn outside of the academic standards that are mandated. If a child can understand what is happening around them and how it came to be, they will be successful in whatever they do. The knowledge I have gained in the arts, music, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history will help me inspire my students to explore the world around them.

When I first saw all the general education requirements there were for the liberal arts curriculum I frowned. How was I suppose to fit all of this into my schedule and graduate on time? The professors know how challenging it is and are always there to help. Attending a liberal arts college gave me more than just the skills I am majoring in. I have developed skills in the arts, music, drama, and others to become a well rounded future educator. Students with liberal arts backgrounds demonstrate an ability to learn and succeed through a challenging curriculum. This is very appealing for future employers. I believe John Gardner sums it up with, "Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants." At a liberal arts college we

are taught how to grow our own plants providing the knowledge to succeed in whatever we do.

Knowing how to think, learn, see the whole picture, and be a better teacher will help me succeed

in life. Through a liberal arts education, I have learned how to do all of these characteristics.