Student Teaching Application – Autobiography

As part of your student teaching application process, your task is to write a personal essay about an experience that has changed you. It should reveal something important about you, taking the reader from where you were before the life-changing event, to the epiphany (moment of revelation) of how this event has changed you for the better.

What happened that changed you, and how have you grown through this experience? What did you overcome? Consider a strong, specific focus of your essay and NOT a laundry list of your achievements. A great essay will tell how you overcame something very specific and unique to you that eventually caused personal growth in you.

For example: You volunteered at a pre-school. Instead of describing all the good work you did there, zero in on an interaction with one student or teacher. What happened to move you to a different stage of your understanding? Describe something that made you show growth or something that may have changed you for the better.

This essay may include elements of teaching in a culturally responsive classroom. Did your epiphany result from observing students’ backgrounds or cultural practices? Were you challenged to provide different styles of learning that were appropriate to all students? How has your practice or expectations changed based on interactions with diverse students?

Another example: You love a certain sport. Instead of describing all the trophies or defeats, how could you describe an event that you overcame to grow into the person that you are today? What happened that changed you? How did you grow by overcoming this experience?

A final example: You won the award for an art project in high school. Since awards are mentioned elsewhere in your application, write your essay about what you’ve learned by creating this artwork. How did its creation push you to overcome, grow, or change? Be specific, avoid clichés, and make a positive connection to how this creation helped you to grow.

Try to write your essay in a positive tone and specific to you. Avoid the 4 D’s – death, drugs, diseases, and disorders. Do not brag about yourself. How can you write this essay to give a school administrator(s) a better idea of who you are today because of a life-changing experience?

This essay will contain 3 main sections:

1) Describe the setting of what is about to happen. Use interesting language.
2) Describe the life-changing event. This is the turning point of what caused the change in you.
3) (Most important) Describe how you grew, changed, or learned something that is for the better. Tell how you have become a more thoughtful, sensitive, brave, or strong person that you are today. Describe the moment of revelation followed by your learning process.
A possible outline: paragraph 1- set the scene. Use a powerful first sentence, and tell what is happening before the epiphany. Maybe hint at how life is about to change. Paragraph 2- this is your impact section. What happened to change life, as you knew it. Paragraph 3- how did you grow, change, learn something new about yourself? You may add other paragraphs, but the general outline needs to cover these 3 main ideas or sections.

Do not use the word ‘epiphany’ in your essay, but do describe how you grew, changed, or learned something as a result of overcoming something.

Make your language colorful, vivid, and filled with specific details. Here are two examples:

Boring: “I want to help people. I love to work with children. Teaching is such a helping profession.”

Better: “While I volunteered in Ms. Alden’s kindergarten class, I watched her wipe more noses, scrub marker-scribble off countless desks, and patiently keep reminding scores of 5-year olds that only one person can go to the restroom at one time. I think that kind of commitment is what I’d like to bring into working with first-graders.”

Format Guidelines

Address it: To Whom It May Concern

8 1/2” x 11” size paper with 1” margins

12-point font, Times New Roman or Cambria

Double-spaced

1-2 pages maximum

Edit for proper grammar and punctuation

Positive outlook or tone