

# Education Autobiography

[ Michael Karlin ]

My senior year of high school I had no idea what I wanted to major in when I set off to the University of Kansas. Despite my parents' constant urges and thinly-veiled threats to figure something out, I just wasn't sure what type of career would best suit me. My friends all seemed completely certain as to their future route, some wanted to be doctors, others lawyers, and so, deciding it would be easier to choose a major than continue dealing with uncertainty, I went with music education.

I have always had a love for music and it has been part of my life since the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade when I started taking piano lessons. In high school I became active in the jazz, marching, and concert bands as well as the several music theory classes the school had to offer. It was at this time that I also began teaching.

My band director, knowing I was a pianist, had given my name out to several middle school parents who were interested in finding a cheap, but decent, piano player to teach their kids. At first I had my doubts and I wasn't sure if I'd be able to replicate the lessons I had been so fond of over the years, but I figured I could give it a try, and it was a decent paying job, so I began teaching piano.

After a few months of teaching weekly lessons to several students, I came to the realization that it was something I really enjoyed. Throughout my junior and senior year my number of students grew as did my ability to instruct. Therefore, when it came time to give in and choose my major, music education seemed the best route.

However, after a year in the music education program at KU I realized that, although I enjoyed music and would strive to continue teaching piano lessons on the side, being a band or choir director was not a career I was interested in at all. At this point I was also enrolled in an introductory biology class in which I was having a rather

enjoyable time. This surprised me because I had never enjoyed the sciences much during high school. They had always been a subject I did well in, but never really connected with. After a very stimulating semester in this biology class I realized that I could perhaps incorporate what I liked from teaching piano lessons and what I liked so far from biology and consider majoring in biology education.

I wasn't sold on the idea yet, so first I decided to take some more biology classes and get involved in the department to decide if this was really for me. After taking molecular biology, genetics, and getting involved with a student biology committee, I came to the conclusion that I really liked everything the classes and department had to offer. It was at this point that I decided to apply for the School of Education and get serious about biology education.

I spent the next 4 years taking a combination of science and education courses, all the while becoming more excited about the prospect of becoming a future biology teacher. And finally, it happened! I graduated! After 4 years of classes and a 5<sup>th</sup> year of student teaching, I was an officially licensed biology teacher. The wonderful school district of Gardner-Edgerton, about 45-minutes south of Kansas City, offered me a position and I happily accepted.

My first year at GEHS was a busy one. I finished my master's degree in curriculum and instruction, I was nominated for, and won the Kansas Horizon Award, I served on a plethora of school improvement committees, and I was elected as the union delegate for our district. By the end of that first year I felt I had progressed from "what am I doing running my own classroom??" to "I think I'm starting to get the hand of this teaching thing." It was a good feeling.

During my second year teaching biology in Gardner I started to feel like I needed a change. I had spent my entire 26 years living in Kansas and although I loved the state,

the school, and my job, I still wanted to see more of the world. At the time, I had a good friend teaching English in Korea. He was leaving at the end of the year and was pretty certain that I could take his job when he left. Turns out he was right, and Chorim Elementary School offered me a position teaching 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade English in Seongnam-si, a major suburb of Seoul.

Upon my arrival to Seoul, I was greeted by my good friend Will (whose job I was taking) my new boss Yun-ju, and several other coworkers. They informed me that, despite the 11 hour flight I had just completed, we would be heading out to dinner and then to neurebang (a small room people rent out to karaoke in) until around 1 in the morning. It was quite the welcome. My next two years in Korea were amazing. Being able to experience a new culture first hand was one of the most enjoyable and thought-provoking opportunities of my life. Throughout the first year I taught at the aforementioned Chorim elementary, and for my second year I had the chance to teach preschool English at a local Hagwon (a small private school).

And then, midway through my second year, I realized it was again time to change things up. I had some good friends living and teaching in Colombia, South America and they gave me a list of schools to apply to. As luck would have it, Colegio Karl C. Parrish was looking for a new computer instructor and I was looking to change my focus to technology. I am now in my second year here in Colombia, teaching middle and high school computer technology. I just finished my graduate certification in technology integration through Boise State University, and I've been having a wonderful time immersing myself in South American culture.

Professionally, I have greatly enjoyed the change to technology instruction. Tech has always been a side passion of mine, and my dream job would be to help educators utilize new technology in their classrooms. I feel like this job has put me one step closer

to that dream, and I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity Colegio Parrish has given me. Someday, I hope to continue my education and eventually become qualified to teach teachers about the best new technologies and how to use them within their curriculums. Until then, South America is proving to be a wonderful stop on my professional journey.