Hicksville Congress of Teachers Elliot Paisner Memorial Scholarship

A Teacher's Impact My Career Goals

by Barbara Watterson

Throughout my time as a student in Hicksville, I have had countless amazing educators who taught me lessons that will last a lifetime. Though there are numerous teachers I would love to highlight and commend on having an impact on my career path, one stands out above the rest: Mrs. Civello, one of the English and Theatre teachers at the high school. Over the course of the past four years, under her wing, I have learned so much about myself and who I want to become.

On my first day of high school, Mrs. Civello was my teacher for first period Introduction to Theatre class. I was extremely nervous walking into the high school, but thanks to the incredibly welcoming atmosphere she created, I had the confidence to continue with my big day without worry. From that day on, I knew that she was going to be an important person for me. In my sophomore year, after being on crew and in the ensemble of my freshman year productions, Mrs. Civello cast me for my first real role, Dixie Delaney, in Hicksville Repertory Company's production of *Macbeth Did It*. Even though it wasn't the big lead in the show, Mrs. Civello trusted me to make my own character decisions and help others with their roles. Not only this, but she also taught me how crucial each aspect of the theatre is to a production: major roles, minor roles, costuming , set construction, marketing, directing, and so much more must all work together to make a great show. For instance, in a musical like *The Little Mermaid*, the show wouldn't be as immersive if there were no fish "swimming" around onstage or if there were no costumes and set. Theatre is a group effort and until I realized this, I believed that the leads were the only part of a production that truly mattered.

Finally, this year, I was given the opportunity to intern with her every other day during her Introduction to Theatre classes. By far, this has been my favorite experience with Mrs. Civello yet. Not only do I get to help my favorite teacher everyday and learn how much work goes into being a teacher, but I've gotten to enjoy how it feels to watch students grow throughout the year. From freshman boys who think that they are too cool for theatre, just taking the class for the arts credit passionately performing monologues onstage to Special Education students breaking out of their quiet shell, it's been incredible to see how much these students have changed.

Specifically there was a Special Education student, who at the beginning of the year was quiet and shy and often did not participate that much. Over the past two class periods, our class has been working on improvisation or acting without a script. One day, he asked if he could go up and act in one of the scenes with a few of our regular students and he did phenomenally well! It was amazing to see how he became so engaged and kept the scene progressing, eager to adapt. Seeing this made not only me but the whole class and Mrs. Civello so proud and happy with how well he did. Along with being Mrs. Civello's intern, I acted as one of Assistant Directors during this year's musical production of *Guys and Dolls*. Being an AD taught me how stressful directing is and how it should be done. If it is my main goal to become an English and Theatre teacher, I'm definitely going to need directing experience so this opportunity opened my eyes greatly. As a director or even as an AD, you need to know how to address large groups of people during overwhelming situations, how to handle major issues like an almost fire during the final scene of a play (it happened!) and how to make notes for students (cast and crew) to follow so that they can better their performance.

These experiences have brought me to the realization of how excited I am to become a teachers. Helping and caring for others has always been a passion of mine. My time at the hgih school with Mrs. Civello helped me come to these realizations, and I'm so deeply thankful for every lesson that she has taught me during my time under her wing. It's sad knowing that I only have less than three months with her as my teacher, but I know that after I graduate, everything I've learned will come in handy. Thank you so much for this opportunity.