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ENG 1101

Unit 1: Education Narrative Essay

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### My Journey through the education system

I grew up on the other side of the world. I was used to living there until one simple ordinary day came and changed my life. My parents told me that we were moving to the United States of America. I was about eight years old at that time. How should an eight-year-old react to this news? Excited? Scared? Upset? All I could think was that a new chapter of my life was about to begin.

Once we arrived in the United States, we managed to get to the place we were staying. Now that this obstacle was more or less over, I had to deal with my issue. What kind of an issue, you may ask? School. Attending school was an issue I had to go through. Now, usually, I wouldn't mind going to school somewhat. But this time, it was different. I had to attend a school in a language I couldn't speak. I was anxious and scared not only because of this but because of what other kids might think of me. Who knows what kind of things the kids might be talking about? The first day at my new school was something I wasn't expecting. Everyone welcomed me despite the language barrier—the teachers and my new classmates. I had about six classes. One of those classes was ESL. ESL stands for English second language. Those who were in a similar boat as me and those who were still relatively new had to take this class. My classes weren't challenging, except I had to translate words I didn't know, which was every word. The

class I was surprisingly good at, yet not surprising at all, was math. Since the number system is practically universal, I needed to identify the keywords and understand what they meant. With my trusty dictionary, I was able to learn essential arithmetic words.

Another way I was learning English was through the consumption of watching cartoon shows. The cartoon show I watched the most was Spongebob Squarepants. The show was running almost every time, and it was very convenient. Usually, after I finished my homework, I would watch the cartoon even though I had no clue what was happening. Before I went to school, I would usually watch an episode while eating my breakfast. An eight-year-old me would never know that this process helped me learn passively. Slowly I understood what the same classic intro song played before every episode was saying. The words I learned from watching this cartoon helped me build my limited word bank.

When I started third grade, it felt completely different than when I first started second grade. I was happy with the progress I was making. I was able to communicate and talk to my other classmates. I knew this was all thanks to my teachers in second grade. My homeroom and ESL teachers helped me learn English; without them, it would've taken much longer to understand English. I would pay a visit and talk with my homeroom teacher whenever I could. She was pleased to see me and the progress I was making. I was still in ESL but didn't need to use my translation dictionary. Now that I think about it, I stopped using my dictionary at the end of second grade, I still had it in my backpack, but I never pulled it out of my bag. I had it just in case I had no clue what we were doing in class. Slowly but shortly, I was writing paragraphs in my classes.

When I reached fourth grade, things started to look up regarding my English proficiency. By this grade, students were expected to write essays, and I could write a mediocre one at best.

My spelling and my grammar were all over the place. Still, I managed to do it. Fifth grade came, and it was my last year as an elementary student. By the end of fifth grade, I realized how fast and short my elementary years were.

Things started to escalate quickly in middle school. The classes got much more complex, and we were expected to write essays and have regular spelling quizzes. Surprisingly, I did exceptionally well with my writing assignments, but well, let's say I didn't do well with my spelling quizzes. As many of us were entering our teenage years, things started to turn South. Knowing English wasn't always great. You would hear unpleasant things that you wish you didn't know. Racism and discrimination were there, although it wasn't always visible. One difference from my elementary years was that I had a homeroom teacher, but I constantly switched classes. This was very exhausting because every 40 minutes or so, my classmates and I had to move up and down the school, which somewhat became a chore. It wasn't as bad once you got used to it. 7th and 8th grade were important for students because there is an important test called the SHSAT. This test determines if you can enroll in a prestigious high school. Many students were focused on getting into these "top-tier" schools but also had to worry about their grades because that was also important to get into these schools. 8th grade came, and students were waiting for their results and the school year to be over. Many students already knew where they were going.

Now we enter high school. Completely different than what middle school was. The first apparent difference I noticed was that high school students didn't have a homeroom teacher, and we were supposed to go to our first-period class. High school was similar to middle school because we were preparing to take another critical test that was more important than the previous SAT test. This test determines what college you can enroll in. Another test that students take is

the ACT; some take both or just one of the two. Unlike me, many students started preparing for the most crucial test in high school. So many students were stressed and anxious. They had to worry about their grades, personal lives, extracurricular activities, and, most important, the test. Students take the SAT and the ACT in their junior years.

The day came when all the junior-year students were instructed to take the test. The school was completely silent. It almost looked like it was abandoned. So many students are anxious and scared to take it. Many weren't ready, and some were, but all that mattered now was the results. All the junior-year students were instructed to go to the gym. We arrived at the gym, and the seats were neatly organized into columns and rows. The gym was so silent that if someone was to drop a pencil, you could hear it from across the room. That day was frigid, especially in the gym. All I could think about was the temperature. Once we were done, we were able to go home. Students were happy that the test was over, and some were worried that they might have slipped up, and all we could do was wait until the results came.

Senior year came. This was when we got back our results on our SAT and ACT. Some students were happy and were sobbing at their scores. Those who weren't satisfied with their results could retake the SAT and the ACT. We were at our final stretch. College was right around the corner, and some students were already eager to leave and were excited about college. And even when students retook the tests, their numbers weren't good enough to get into their dream schools. Many students believed that their careers and life were over just because of one or two tests determining where they could enroll and couldn't. They thought that the numbers on their tests showed them what they could achieve and couldn't. Even when they tried their best and studied to their absolute limit, it was not appealing enough. We were about to start a new chapter in life, whether we liked it or not.

College came, and things felt utterly different. The first significant change was that we could create our schedule. We were able to take classes in the morning, afternoon, and even during the evenings. It's very convenient for those who have jobs and other personal businesses. Classes are much more demanding and last much longer. It took a while to adjust, but I got used to the length of classes and the subjects taught. Looking back at my past and the person I am today, I realize that life keeps moving no matter what. Things might not go the right way sometimes, and you might not achieve what you want even if you give it your all, but just because you don't achieve it doesn't mean it's over. There are other doors and opportunities constantly opening. It's up to you to choose the path you want to take.