



## Follow Your Heart

My cousin will be going off to college in the fall and when I asked if she knew what she wanted to major in she said, "I would really have loved to be a teacher, but my parents would kill me."

As pained as I was to hear this, I was not the least bit surprised. I often get one of two responses when I tell someone that I am in school to be a middle school teacher, "Why? You won't make any money" or "You're crazy."

Throughout college I would ask myself, when did teachers start getting pitied rather than praise? Why is pursuing a career in education now seen as foolish rather than prestigious or honorable? Have I made the right career choice?

During my first education course, students were required to do a short field experience and observe active teachers. On the morning that I was scheduled to do my first observation, I woke up early, ate a good breakfast and put way too much thought into my outfit--- all to ensure I would make a great first impression on my cooperating teacher so she would find me worthy of being her coworker one day. After a polite introduction she asked me "Do you still have time to change your major? Because every day I wish I had never chosen this career." On the way home I cried and called my mom, asking if I should change majors. The only thing she said was that I should follow my heart.

I continued pursuing a degree in education, and I learned to ignore the negative stigma associated with being, not only a teacher, but a ***middle*** school teacher. The negativity fueled me to try to become a teacher worth praising. I felt inspired by my professors and encouraged by my family. As I began my student teaching, my passion only grew stronger, and I would spend all my free time making and revising my lesson plans. I constantly thought about how to make my lessons more engaging and how I can reach my students. On the last day of my student teaching in the fall, I went to say goodbye to my students, and I cried-- just as I did on my way home from my first observation, but this time it was for a different reason. As I said goodbye to my students, one of them stood up with tears in her eyes and gave me a card filled with their gratitude for the time I spent with them. I realized that they did not pity me and never once did they think I was foolish in my career choice. I had made a difference in their lives, however small it might have been and that was all the validation I would ever need.

When my cousin told me she would have loved to be a teacher, I told her the same thing I would tell any student who is contemplating a career in education. I told her the same thing my mom said to me.

***Follow your heart.***

*We wish for you a restful summer with time to recharge and relax!*

*Musings is circulated by the Campbell University's Middle Grades Program of Study.*

*For more information, to contribute or to get on the direct mailing list, contact Dr. Lora Roukema at [roukema@campbell](mailto:roukema@campbell).*

*The author of this edition, Rose Levert Roberts, is a May graduate from Campbell University. She majored in Middle Grades Education and hopes to teach young adolescents in Math and/or Science starting in the fall.*