

Lauren Sebring

SMCPS, Leonardtown High School Senior, TAM, Early College AAT

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren Sebring. I am a senior at Leonardtown High School and dually enrolled at the College of Southern Maryland. I completed the Teacher Academy (TAM) program last school year and have moved on to the Early College AAT Program this year. I have dreamed of becoming an elementary school teacher for as long as I can remember, from bossing my little brother around in my play schoolhouse to helping struggling classmates. Coming from a private school, high school was quite an adjustment for me. However, I found my place in TAM.

Ms. Chew fostered such an amazing atmosphere and offered us endless opportunities for growth. The first year of TAM was focused on human growth and development, all while completing group projects, building our portfolios, and starting to observe classrooms. The second year of TAM was definitely the highlight of it all. We finally got to start an internship and continued learning how to effectively teach while also strengthening our professional skills. I loved it all, the field trips, the observations, and most of all working with the students in my internship! My self-efficacy grew rapidly as I watched myself make my dreams become a reality. We were given constant feedback and continuously worked collaboratively with our peers to share experiences and teaching strategies that had been working for us. I could easily see the difference I was making, and it empowered me to keep pushing towards getting into the classroom as soon as I could. All of these experiences in TAM, including SkillsUSA, Educator's Rising, and my internship, helped prepare me for what was ahead.

At the end of TAM, we were offered a couple of different options for our senior year if we wanted to continue down a teaching pathway. I chose the Early College AAT pathway for a couple of reasons. Not only did I want to get a headstart on my teaching degree, but I had already planned to stay close to home to get my elementary education degree, so CSM was a perfect place for me to start. It has allowed me to keep a part-time job at a local construction company while also working at two horse farms in the evenings. Doing this has not only given me a head start on my degree, but it has also given me a way to start earning money for my future. SMCPS also pays for two classes a semester and provides a 25% discount on the other two classes, as I am recognized as college and career ready, which is also a wonderful help!

Early College has been an amazing experience thus far. They have a variety of tutoring services available at all times, caring professors, and small class sizes. All of these

benefits have helped make it feel so valuable in improving my college readiness. With smaller class sizes, we are able to get to know our professors and build rapport with them while also receiving a more personalized education, similar to the high school setting, which has kept it from being overwhelming. At the same time, I have improved my time management skills, all while learning to balance life and my other responsibilities outside of school. These classes have not only allowed me to understand what college will be like, but the few teaching-based classes we have taken have really enhanced my desire to become a teacher. This opportunity has been amazing, and I am so thankful that I have gotten to be a part of it.

All of these educational opportunities fostered through TAM and Early College have provided a direct path for my future teaching degree. I have always planned to stay close to home by completing my associates at CSM and then finishing my bachelor's degree through Towson's Satellite campus. The opportunity for a local four-year degree is very enticing to me as I want to start teaching as soon as I can, but I also want to stay close to home while getting my degree. I plan to stay and teach in St. Mary's County, so possibly being able to do my practicum and field experiences in St. Mary's County schools would be an amazing way to get my foot in the door.

For me and many others, staying close to home is such a great way to save money while having a more flexible schedule. Having such a close commute to college is wonderful for many reasons. It allows you to keep your personal responsibilities while also saving money yet again. There are endless benefits within community college and a local four-year degree, and I hope to be a part of that. Being able to enter any workforce with financial stability, a support system close by, and community connections is so valuable. It makes the transition so much easier, and that is what I have always hoped to experience. As a pretty hardworking person, I feel that college is what you make of it, and as long as you are dedicated and put your best foot forward, success will come your way, no matter where you go or what path you end up choosing.

TAM and Early College have given me and others so many qualities and skills to succeed in our higher education and future classrooms. Although it has all required hard work and time, I feel as if my ability to adjust so easily to a college setting speaks volumes about what I have learned in TAM and my personal work experiences through the years. Life is all about learning, and being able to build my educational career so close to home would be amazing, not only for me but for many others coming behind me as TAM has continued to grow in the past couple of years. Overall, I think that TAM and Early College have not only fueled my passion for teaching but have also offered endless opportunities, making a teaching career much more accessible for myself and others. As I continue working towards my elementary education degree, I hope to watch

these programs blossom and maybe even take part in them. All in all, teaching is the profession that fuels all other professions, so I hope that we as a society can continue to support educators and build strong programs to further educational success everywhere, even close to home.

Sincerely, Lauren Sebring