Throughout my elementary school years I was never interested in the general science subject. During those years, I remember thinking that boys were supposed to be the ones interested in science and girls were supposed to be the ones interested in English. So throughout most of my elementary years, I focused on English and writing and I have no recollection of being interested in science at all during these years. I won many awards in my classes for my English and writing accomplishments but never for science. The first time I can recall being interested in science was my 6th grade general science class when for the first time I did a hands-on experiment where I could control the experiment by myself and be creative with the procedure. For this experiment, I was allowed to raise and conduct my research on two Coturnix Quails (one control bird and one test bird) after school everyday. The subject of my research was on which non-sweetened cereal brands quails liked better such as Rice Crispies, or Corn Flakes. I had about 10 different types of cereal that I used and this research went on for approximately 3 months. Then, after the 3 months I went to a Coturnix Fair at Michigan State University and displayed my research to others. Even though I didn’t reserve an award, I was still very proud of my project and all of the work I put into it. My teacher for this class played a big influence on fostering my interest in science because she would spend time after school with us to help us with our quail experiments and she was the first teacher I could remember that made science fun where we could be creative and not be bored with factual information which was meant to be memorized. She made me feel proud about my accomplishment to be involved in such a basic science experiment.

My first experience with the world of chemistry I have now grown to love was in the 8th grade. During that year, I took the class Introduction to Physical Science, which was the advanced science class for the 8th grade. I was very proud to be chosen to take the advance class and I took the class very seriously. This class sparked an interest with me when my teacher started discussing atoms and the particles within them. I remember
being amazed and in awe at the complexity of the idea that all matter was composed of these very tiny atoms which cannot be seen with the naked eye or for a microscope for that matter. This class was also the first time where I was able to do real experiments using Bunsen burners and toxic chemicals. I remember when during one lab one of the groups kept a cork on one of their flasks, which was being heated and contained reacting chemicals, and soon after the cork shot up in the air and chemicals went spraying upward and splashed the top of the ceiling. Even though the situation was serious and very dangerous, I was intrigued with the power and excitement chemicals possessed. I remember another time in this same class where we did an experiment called the sludge experiment, which was part of our final exam and was a way for us to demonstrate our separation techniques we had learned throughout the year. This sludge was different for every group and was composed of a mixture of many various things such as ink, dye, and alcohols and it was our assignment to separate out the various components of the mixture to determine its composition. We had no procedure and no rules. I remember this experiment being exciting and enjoyable because this was a way for me to apply all of the knowledge I had learned throughout the course and it was like solving a mystery, “What is in the sludge?” It was experiences like these, which began my science obsession during my high school years.

High school was defiantly the time when I decided I want to be a chemistry teacher and it was all due to one man, my high school chemistry teacher. This science teacher was my favorite teacher and still is to this day. He made chemistry fun, exciting and easy for me to learn. I thought in high school that I was good in chemistry, that it was my knack, but today I know this ease and comfort with the subject material was based solely on my teacher’s instruction. I took two chemistry classes with this teacher: Organic Chemistry and Advanced Placement Chemistry. Each of these classes inspired me to major in chemistry and gave me the confidence I needed to become the person I am today. This teacher taught me basic organizational skills and also very complex college level chemistry problems. He had high expectations of each of his students to work hard, understand each problem, and engage in out-of-class learning opportunities whenever possible. One specific example of this out-of-class learning he persuaded me to do was I went to two Saturdays during my junior year and participated in Science week at the
Meridan and Lansing Malls (which my teacher started). This was a great experience for me because I was able to “show off” my chemistry knowledge and I was proud of the fact that I was behind the table teaching others about chemistry. (I ran some flame tests and froze flowers in liquid nitrogen and smashed them.) This was also where I met the Chemistry Club members from Michigan State University and observed some of their elaborate demonstrations. After watching these demos, I became envious of the knowledge and enjoyment these MSU students were having and this was the last major factor in my decision choose the major in chemistry in college. During my junior year in organic chemistry class, we also went to an environmental chemical engineering company and talked with the scientists there where they showed us some of the instruments they used and what their jobs were like. This was a great experience for me because I saw what a scientist’s workplace atmosphere was like and how the subject matter in the class could be applied to the real world such as this company mainly cleaned up gasoline and oil spills within the environment. This teacher has influenced what kind of science teacher I want to be because I want to design my class and teach just as he did. I want to show all of my students that science can be fun and easy to learn. I want to use some of the same techniques as he did to motivate students to learn by showing them the real world application of the course material and I will try my hardest to give options and give open-ended assignments to my students where they can have a chance to demonstrate their creative abilities.

Currently, I am working at Abrams Planetarium here at Michigan State University. My employment at the planetarium has had a significant and influential role in inspiring me to teach. This is because I am around children all day long and I love to see their excitement in their eyes when they see Saturn’s ring for the first time through a telescope. My experience at the planetarium has made me look forward to the future when I get to see my own students’ excitement and curiosity become sparked when they learn something new for the first time just as these children do at the planetarium. My overall goal as a science teacher is to make sure that science is fun to learn and never where students have to constantly memorize factual information.