

**How has your educational experience defined you and how do you think it will affect your future?**

Attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School, my experience as a US Senate Page in Washington, D.C., and participating in the Color of Justice program have each played important roles in defining who I am today and in shaping my future education and career goals.

I grew up in Skagway which is a very small, predominantly white town in Southeast Alaska that flourishes because of the cruise ships that visit daily from May through September. Prior to starting Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, I knew very little about the Native villages and nothing of the hardships and tragedy that are common there. Alaska has some of the highest rates in the country of STDs, teen pregnancy, depression, suicide, and domestic abuse. Alcoholism and drug addiction are also a huge problem, but the worst thing I have learned is how many of my friends have been sexually assaulted in their village by either a family member or someone else known to them. These friends hold the pain inside because the people surrounding them turn a blind eye. They feel like they must accept that that's just the way things are and always will be. This made me realize how strong many of the students at Mt. Edgecumbe are. They come from places of great pain and hard times to our school which is a safe haven for them, a place where they can change their lives for the better.

High school was a wakeup call for me. It shattered the fairytale illusion of Alaska I had previously. It made me grow up and realize how difficult life can be here, and I've learned to see things through the eyes of others. Every teenager I know, including myself, say they hate living in Alaska because of the hardships people suffer; however, none of us would rather grow up anywhere else. Life can be dark for Alaskans, yet Alaska is a unique and extraordinary place filled with strong people. I'll always be proud to call Alaska home.

Prior to the spring of 2018, I thought I wanted to study fashion design in college. I took every art class that Mt. Edgecumbe offered and I took an introductory fashion design class online through the Fashion Institute of America. Then I was extremely fortunate to be chosen by Senator Murkowski to be a US Senate Page in Washington, D.C. for the spring semester of 2018. It was hard work being a page! We attended classes Monday through Friday from 6:45am - 9:45am and then we had to be on the Senate floor by 10am ready to work for 8 - 12 hours, but it was fascinating to see how our government works first-hand. Over the course of last spring, I realized that I was hooked on politics and government, and I now want to study political science for my undergraduate degree.

This past December, Mt. Edgecumbe High School hosted a two-day program called Color of Justice, and it had a huge impact on me. This program, which is sponsored by the National Association of Women Judges, encourages girls and minorities to consider legal and judicial careers by bringing in both working and retired judges and lawyers to speak and to conduct workshops and other activities. During the program, I had time to speak with all of the honored guests, and I learned so much about pursuing a law career. While I am set on majoring in political science as an undergraduate, I am now inspired and motivated to attend law school after speaking with Alaska Supreme Court Justice Susan Carney. As I learned from Justice Carney, a J.D. education would be very valuable for any future career. If I do practice law, I would like to use my education to help children and women who are victims of domestic and/or sexual abuse. As I learned at Mt. Edgecumbe, this is not something that we just hear about on the news, it happens to our friends and neighbors.

In conclusion, all of my educational experiences, but especially my time at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, being a US Senate Page, and attending the Color of Justice program, have been very influential on who I am now and where I would like to go in terms of education and career goals. These three experiences are connected and together they make me even more excited and sure about my future.