

Who or what in your educational experience has influenced your direction in life?

Growing up, like many kids, I wanted to be everything – a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, an astronaut, and even a ballerina. I never was super passionate about something until eighth grade. My aunt began to tell me all these stories about Red4Ed protests she participated in. She was a third-grade teacher during the intense COVID years, and seeing her help all these students allowed me to realize I wanted to do something in my future where I could help people. I was not yet sure how to go about doing that.

This same year, I went into anaphylaxis, which triggered me to have a disability known as transformed migraines. This means that I have suffered from a migraine and its symptoms every day since the beginning of eighth grade. I was really struggling to find coping mechanisms to get me back on my feet.

Once my freshman year rolled around, I was still adjusting to working through my migraines while having to do school online. Then, just a couple weeks before Christmas, my aunt passed away due to COVID-19 complications at only 32 years old. I didn't know how to process this yet. Soon after, my parents told me we were making the cross-country move from Phoenix, Arizona to Sitka, Alaska. I felt like this could only mean the worst was ahead. I was leaving behind everything I had ever known – friends, family, and even stores. Now, looking back it was one of the best things that has ever happened to me.

I had to stay on online school due to worsening migraine symptoms my sophomore year. I had no friends in this new town and was scared. At this time, because I have always wanted to help people, I thought the best way to do that would be by becoming a neurologist to help those with

similar issues to me. Yet, as time went on, I found out I do not like medicine practices. I did not know what my passion was because of how much I was passionate about.

My junior year, I made the wonderful choice to go back in person. I immediately became very involved in school. I joined clubs like Drama, Debate, and Forensics and student council. I ran for and won the Student Body Publicity Manager position. That's when I was offered the chance to go to an Alaska Association of Student Governments conference.

At this conference, we argued whether or not to pass resolutions to benefit the student body in Alaska. Every time I spoke, I felt every word; I felt pure passion. I went on to win the Delegate of the Region award that conference. I went home knowing this is what I wanted to do with my life and my mind has not even slightly shifted since. Politics is my true passion.

I went to two more conferences that continued to make me firm in my decision. I was able to write and pass resolutions about AASG being against House Bill 105, implementing an anonymous tip line in Alaskan high schools, better educating school staff on student mental health, and AASG being against book bans. I won the Resolution of the Conference award for the resolution about HB 105 and won the Delegate of the Region award for a second time. These conferences make me so sure of myself and I look forward to every one.

I have had the opportunity to get involved in politics outside of AASG in many ways. I took my AASG resolutions to school boards, the House and Senate Education Committees, and the State Board of Education, which allowed me to appear in many media outlets. I have also participated in the Youth Advocacy Institute where I was able to advocate for an increase in the Base Student Allocation. Over summer, I even participated in the Democracy Summer Program, where I got to be a fellow with Congresswoman Mary Peltola. This year, I went as far as gaining the position of

Treasurer at UAS. I take every chance possible to be involved in the politics of my state and look forward to being able to do so in the future.

As tough as the hurdles may have been to get here, so many things and people led me through this journey – whether my aunt or AASG. I am so proud of how far I have gotten. Now, I am going to graduate as valedictorian, and I am going to go to college for political science.