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I was first attracted to The University of Maryland's Music Education program because it was one of the few colleges I researched and visited that allowed its students to begin regular observations of public school music classes in the first semester of freshman year. After all of my experiences this past year, I am certain that it was the right choice for me. I've enjoyed the benefits this year of a small, conservatory-like music school within a large liberal arts university just a short metro ride away from Washington D.C. and all of its opportunities and entertainment.

There are ten other students in my freshman Music Education course that I will continue to share classes and teaching experiences with for my next three years at UMD. Since the class is so small, we've all become very close; the music education professors like to joke that each class of "MU-ED" students that come through the program start out as strangers and graduate as a family. During the first semester of the course, class met twice a week where we learned some of the basics of what being a music educator means. We read about famous scholars in education and their views on child development and learning, we created lesson plans and taught our peers as practice, and we discussed our biggest fears and worries about teaching and how to best overcome them. Four times throughout the semester we observed music classes of

different age groups in nearby public schools. For the first time, I was able to observe a classroom while thinking in the teacher's perspective, paying close attention to the class objectives, what kind of activities the teacher led to achieve the objectives, and how the teacher adapted to unexpected situations that arose. This helped me to recognize the basic organizational framework that goes into creating a lesson plan and how each teacher uses his or her creativity to give the lesson more intrigue and meaning than would be possible to learn from a book.

My second semester Music Education course did not meet formally in class as we had in the first semester. Instead, we observed an elementary band at a nearby arts focus school once a week for an hour. Although we were only required by the Music Education department to be there to observe the students, the band teacher at the school encouraged us to teach sectionals for part of the class time. Even though I am a violinist and haven't taken a single brass or woodwinds methods class yet (which start sophomore year), I was able to teach trumpet sectionals for part of class every week. This was definitely out of my comfort zone at first, but my professor and the school band teacher were always there to help the students and me when necessary. By the end of the semester, I had helped the students to improve, but I think I learned even more from them. It was a wonderful experience for me, and I definitely feel as

though I conquered one of my first major teaching obstacles with success.

My advice to any student who might be contemplating becoming a music teacher is to volunteer in community music programs and get to know music faculty in the area. Through the years, I have found that faculty are very supportive of fellow musicians and teachers, and are always willing to answer questions about teaching music. The only way to truly know if Music Education is the right vocation for you is to experience it first hand. I have learned more this way than any textbook could ever teach me.