As a child I recall learning about different species local to Texas while my grandfather called off the scientific names of the animals in his backyard from our perch on his porch. It wasn’t until seven years later that I realized how much science had become a part of my personality, and I began my journey to become a scientist like him.

I began my informal work with children as a camp counselor at the Houston Museum of Natural History in 2012 and have continued annually every year since then. As I developed and taught biological curriculum to groups ranging from 6-14 years old, I developed my teaching skills daily. Of all the children that I have taught, however, I found the 10-12 year old students the most challenging and rewarding. At that age, students are developing their own identities and learning what subjects interest them; as a result, they need encouragement to ensure that they feel comfortable exploring their interests in a non-judgmental yet challenging atmosphere. This allows intellectual growth and maturity with regard to subject matter.

As an educator working with early middle school-aged students, I plan to focus on the person rather than just the learner. I understand that emphasizing a student’s strongest areas allows him to broaden his mind and open up to the curriculum. To effectively teach this group, I believe that I will need to apply the curriculum to their everyday lives and ask them to do the same. However, if a student does not plan to pursue science in the future, he can still learn how it operates in his life in a way the supports his future learning through hands-on activities such as dissecting a frog to grasp how tendons work in our bodies.

Despite not initially planning to enter the education field and beginning as a strictly science major, I have come to appreciate the “A-ha!” moments that occur in science classrooms, and I intend to work toward my education degree in a way that encourages others to love science as much as I do.