

Although we spend about 30% of our day communicating with teachers, students generally don't know their teachers well. We know that we can ask them questions and that they hold a profusion of information, but seeing them outside of school is still a very odd experience. In fact, seeing teachers just being human can cause us to have a double-take. What is it about the student-teacher relationship that makes meaningful interaction with teachers so remarkably awkward in this day and age?

To explore this issue, I have set out on a quest to talk to and connect with teachers so that they are not simply an information vending machine, but a friend who cares about your education.

I began with speaking to Mr. Oliveira, one of the most respected teachers at Interlake, renowned for calling everybody "adorable" and for brutal multiple choice tests. Sitting down during a relatively busy tutorial, I asked the following:

Chunny: Hello Mr. Oliveira! First off, gotta ask: Why diet coke?

Mr. Oliveira: (laughs) Love the fizz. All I'll say on that.

Chunny: Sure thing. So what is your favorite topic in U.S. History?

Mr. Oliveira: It's changed over the years, depending on my own interests shifted, but right now, looking at the rise and decline of cities is my favorite. Seeing and exploring how people moved into the cities and then the retreat to suburbs is fascinating, especially the city of Detroit.

Chunny: Why do you only teach APUSH? Are there other classes that you wish to cover?

Mr. Oliveira: That isn't exactly a choice that I've made, more of the administration looking for who needs to teach where. In fact, I think I've taught in every history class at Interlake, other

than ToK, AP Gov and AP World History. But, I really do love U.S. History, and look forward to teaching it in the future.

Chunny: What do you think is the best part of Interlake?

Mr. Oliveira: Well, Interlake really is a unique place in the world, as a high school and due to the diversity here. And I don't mean just racial diversity, but also economic diversity, ethical diversity, and etcetera. But for any high school, it feels like we have a minimum of cliques compared to other places in the US. Interlake kids seem to get along rather well. And of course, Interlake is really academically driven. Not just a single group of students, but everyone cares about learning something, and that really makes teaching worthwhile.

Chunny: If you could have your students understand one thing perfectly and without question, what would it be?

Mr. Oliveira: Well... the US Tax Code (laughs). Seriously though, that's a pretty tough question. I think that the content that I teach is not *that* important compared to the other things I try to impart. Research and study skills are vastly important, not only for a future in academia but also in life. I guess one of the most important things that I need to teach is how students need to be resilient and not give up. Lots of these kids haven't been truly challenged before, or have been able to get things easily. And it isn't easy to "teach" a student how to be resilient.

Chunny: One last question, who was your most influential teacher?

Mr. Oliveira: For me, the most influential "teachers" in my life were a group of inner-urban kids from Detroit and Chicago. I was a camp counselor for several years, and through that experience, those kids really inspired me to become a good teacher. These days, I'm very much inspired by my students. They show me something new every day.

Who would you like the Interlake Inquirer to interview next? Send a teacher's name to _____@gmail.com by _____ and learn more about your favorite teachers!

A mere mention of an upcoming timed and graded essay can strike fear into the hearts of even the most resilient of students. But did you know that teachers too fear these essays? Mr. Calvert, freshmen and sophomore English teacher, sheds some insight from the other end of the essay exchange. Students have a frustrating tendency to only see their teachers from strictly an academic perspective. What students do not realize is that their teachers are also committed to raising better people who are happy with themselves and who can acknowledge their mistakes, learn from them, and improve upon them. Mr Calvert prioritizes this type of intellectual development. To that end, he takes pride in having won Interlake's MVP award in 2007. Sitting down to talk to him was a very enjoyable experience, recreated below for your reading enjoyment!

Chunny: What's your favorite part of teaching English?

Mr. Calvert: Well, I mean, it might sound like a semantic difference, but I don't teach English – I teach students. And that's my favorite part of teaching. I mean, English allows me to talk about virtually anything and any subject that comes up which seems interesting. My favorite part of teaching is that I teach people and I happen to use English while doing that.

Chunny: Would you be comfortable with teaching other subjects?

Mr. Calvert: I've always wanted to teach Health. I think I teach History to some extent in my English class a lot. I'm going to be teaching ToK in the spring which I've wanted to do for a long time. I'm also endorsed in psychology ... so I would be open to teaching a lot of things.

Chunny: What other jobs have you done in the past, or would be interested in doing or teaching?

Mr. Calvert: Well, I was a life guard and a pool manager before I became a teacher. I swam and played water polo in college. So to be honest, I've tried to think of other jobs that I would be interested in doing, and nothing has come to mind a lot. I think that I could do a lot of jobs, but I think my satisfaction is a lot higher than virtually all of my peer teachers.

Chunny: You mentioned you played water polo before, how did you get into playing golf?

Mr. Calvert: I was a tennis coach for 10 years, and now I've been a golf coach for almost 10 years, and they both started the same way. I became friends with the head coach of both those sports, and I enjoyed being around those people, and then they needed help, and then in both cases I started not knowing much and not having a tremendous amount of skill, and over time, I just ... get it!

Chunny: What is your favorite part about teaching, and what is your favorite part of Interlake as a whole?

Mr. Calvert: My favorite part of teaching is in developing relationships with students. It has to do with human interaction and getting to know people. My favorite part of Interlake is the whole dang place. I'm very proud of this school, and I think that the vast majority of teachers here know their subject matter very well, work very hard, and try to do the best things for the kids. I taught in a place for 15 years that was very different from that. I appreciate it here.

Chunny: If you could teach your students one thing, and guarantee that they would understand it, what would it be?

Mr. Calvert: If I could teach them one thing – and I don't know how to do this – I would teach them how to be happy.

Chunny: So teach them how to be happy, how to find happiness...?

Mr. Calvert: Yeah, because it's not easy. I think there are a lot of narratives and voices and messages out there that go against being happy. They tell people what they should do and what they should want and what they should believe, and people end up getting those things and they wake up one morning and they're profoundly unhappy. And being happy is not that easy sometimes. You have to know who you are, you have to know what your demons are, and you have to learn how to fight your demons. So yeah, I teach people how to be happy.

Chunny: Does teaching make you happy?

Mr. Calvert: I love my job! I profoundly hate grading essays; it is the one part of my job that is killing me, because it never stops, from September to May, you know, every weekend, every night, I grade, so I love to teach, but I wish I could get rid of grading.

Chunny: A more English related question, what is your favorite book/author/genre?

Mr. Calvert: To me, my favorite book is probably a tie between *Huckleberry Finn* or *The Heart of Darkness* and *The Plague*. I just think they are all really true. If some alien came to this planet and asked me "what is America like?" I would hand them *Huck Finn*, although I think *The Plague* and *The Heart of Darkness* both get to the complexity of human nature.

Chunny: What is your biggest pet peeve, in regards to students or anything else?

Mr. Calvert: That could be a long list. I don't know if this is a pet peeve, but it drives me nuts when students don't present themselves confidently. That shy, nervous, tentative voice that I can barely hear drives me nuts. Lack of not being proactive, lack of sleep, and of course, when students are more worried about grades than learning! That traits separates self-actualized people from those who are not, although most kids are not, because they are young and still have some way to go.

Chunny: Do you have any pets and/or what are their names?

Mr. Calvert: My allergist said that I could have a turtle or a snake.

Chunny: Do you have a turtle and/or snake?

Mr. Calvert: (laughs) I have neither.

Chunny: How did you end up collecting all these pictures around your classroom?

Mr. Calvert: Almost all of these have a story or something behind them, some I've had for over twenty years, while others come from when I studied in Europe. Some are student art, some are just calendars that had cool art that I chopped up, and yet others are examples are types of things, paintings that were done by students, actually several of them, and they all become examples in class.

As well as we *think* we know our teachers, there's always a bit more humanity than we students may think. A huge thank you to Mr. Calvert for agreeing to be interviewed, **thank you dear reader, and I shall see you in the next edition!**

Do you have a teacher who you would like to see interviewed? Email their name to interlakeinquirer@gmail.com for the next edition!

Comment [CD1]: George, edit this however you would like.