

August 27th, 2018

During my time in the Brewster School System I encountered no course instructor or classroom teacher with a perspective comparable to Scott Beall's. Beginning as one of his first students in a fourth grade enrichment program, I was very fortunate to learn from Scott through eighth grade. I am now finishing a Ph.D. program, and over my cumulative 22 years as a student (and five as a teacher!) I have found myself pleasantly surprised to learn and re-learn lessons from Scott's classroom in many contexts and with increasing clarity. I often think of the scientific investigation I've undertaken for my dissertation through the lens of the Autonomous Learner, and, unlike any other classes I've taken, I feel what Scott was teaching has followed me and helped me continue my growth well into adulthood. His influence laid foundations not only for my future as a scientist and my compassionate worldview, but also for the eventual honest and confident development of my personhood, and I believe that his philosophies are uniquely innovative and crucial for the future of education.

For years, Scott's classroom was the only place in school I felt comfortable exploring. As a class we worked to not just memorize facts, but instead to take ownership of the concepts they symbolized and interrogate them to synthesize new, personal, persistent knowledge. In a school district that heavily emphasized standardized testing and adherence to a grade-wide curriculum, it sometimes felt unorthodox spending class time clapping out polyrhythms, developing new musical notation schemes, or doing back-of-the-envelope calculations to estimate the scale of global fossil fuel dependence. Although I obviously enjoyed these activities, it took me much longer to see and appreciate what exactly Scott was using them to teach me: that it's okay to investigate something engaging without knowing the outcome or how it may be personally serving. In Scott's classes we weren't expected to take the truths we explored on faith or authority, rather we were shown how to build them for ourselves on our own reproducible experiences. More than anything I learned about music, mathematics, sustainability, or culture, I learned *how to learn* by questioning my own knowledge and assumptions and those of my peers. It's counterintuitive to me that students are expected to teach themselves how to learn in ways that work for them while so rarely being exposed to systems of knowledge integration other than passive acceptance of an instructor's understanding of a specific subject. I believe that Scott's philosophy of autonomous learning and his fostering of individual, interest-driven inquiry established my personal concept of what it means to investigate and has quite literally built my career in science.

Though he is obviously an innovative and extremely capable teacher with a strong core curricular concept, Scott Beall is much more to me than his curriculum and how he presents it. I was a perpetually anxious child, bullied often for not appearing or behaving as my peers and teachers demanded, but in Scott's classes I was protected and defended for my inherent worth as a person. It took me a long time to recognize this protection not only as something I

appreciated, but also as an inherent part of how Scott views education and imparts this vision to his students. It took me decades to fully appreciate Scott's examples of empathy, but I believe they played an indispensable role in my growing up. Leading by example, Scott helped teach me to listen to myself and interrogate how I thought about who I was and why I insisted on internalizing others' assumptions. Building off his lessons, I learned to confidently explore relatively uncharted territory and foreign concepts, knowing that if I started somewhere familiar I could and would figure out how to learn more. Scott gave me the methods I would use to learn about myself, but I wouldn't be here to have done anything with them if I wasn't first confident that I am worthy of appreciation and that no one can take who I am from me. Scott Beall doesn't just teach something to his students, he embodies a life philosophy and invites his students to explore it with him knowing that if they're given the appropriate foundations they can irrevocably coax from within them the motivations for their own fulfillment. This attitude I think demonstrates the type of student and citizen that Scott knows will inherit the future: determined individuals with a passion for creative, meaningful problem solving and a focus on protecting what matters both within themselves and across the planet.

Scott Beall is teaching tools for building a more conscious society that works better for everyone by encouraging young people to build their own knowledge, seek fulfillment in individualized inquiry, and think and act with compassion and an open mind. There is no way forward for our planet in an era so rapidly changing unless we find ourselves willing to swallow our pride and engage honestly and courageously with whatever unprecedented challenges the future will hold. Scott's approach to multidisciplinary education is a call to action to raise critical and innovative thinkers ready to love themselves and each other. We as a society are responsible for this legacy: to do better than we have for ourselves in the past. I and many of Scott's other students have lived this betterment within ourselves, proving to us with our own experiences that it's achievable in greater context, leaving us ready to build it by starting somewhere familiar and asking the right questions.

Margaret Eminizer