

Ivy Kolb
Grade 12
Boise Senior High School
Idaho

What Drives Me

The biggest thing that drives me is wanting to break and end the stigma against students in high school who are enrolled in the special education program. There has always been this bubble around them that portrays a negative image. Normalizing people living with disabilities is so important because they are no different than anyone else. I am a part of a program called "Peer Mentors" at Boise High which is a large step towards bettering the schools when it comes to how special ed students are treated. It is also something that I would love to be a part of every high school in the future. The program includes students like myself and others who want to be a helping hand to those in need, we are all kind hearted students who spend one period of our school day in the special education room helping with whatever is needed of us. These things range from helping with retaking tests, going over vocab, doing laundry, putting away dishes and so much more. We are so fortunate to have these materials like sinks, ovens, dishwashers and washers/dryers in our classroom to make these learning experiences possible. Sometimes it can be a struggle trying to make these lessons happen and flow smoothly because there are always going to be bumps in the road, kids who are having bad days and kids just not wanting to learn. Although in the classroom we have struggles, they are still able to get through it and achieve their goals. Seeing the bright eyes of a student who just learned how to cook something new or how to do their math problem is unlike anything else. Walking into a room full of smiling faces every single day during 5th period makes my day instantly better. Being a part of this program has opened my eyes to so many new things. Seeing how a student with down syndrome or autism views the everyday world has changed my perspective of life drastically. There are so many things that I can do without a second thought but when working with all these students in the classroom I have to take a step back, slow down and realize that it's not always that easy for them. Spending time with them has made me so passionate about special education that I have decided to pursue a career in special education when I grow up. When I announced to the class that I would be studying special education in college I received nothing but support and encouragement from both the students and teachers which made me feel so safe and secure with my decision. Growing up in this environment the past couple of years has really been a blessing and I am so excited for my studies in college. Being a special education teacher is something that won't just be a job to me, it's something that I will love doing every day and something that I could never see myself getting tired of. Working with the school board towards integrating the "Peer Mentor" program at whatever school I teach at will be my first course of action. I owe so much to these amazing teachers who have created such a life changing program for both the special education students and peer mentors.