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I loved my entire time at QHS and I remember my time on Student Council very fondly, from running the school store, to organizing and attending dances, sending candy cane messages and ultimately reworking the constitution when I reached Secondary 5 and the Presidency.

After graduating, I applied to go to a United World College where I would have undertaken the IB curriculum, but after a round of interviews, I was not accepted. I ended up going to live with my aunt in Edmonton and doing grade 12 in a Performing Arts School. It was one of the most difficult years of my life, but taught me a lot about myself and resilience and it made me appreciate the family feel of QHS by stark contrast. It could not have been more different - there were 400 people in my graduating year alone.

I eventually ended up at McGill University and did an Honours Degree in International Development Studies and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. I always enjoyed all my classes at QHS and loved too many disciplines to choose just one, so I went down the interdisciplinary route. This allowed me to study fields as diverse as economics to Jewish studies to political philosophy and religious studies. I also began learning Spanish in earnest and spent my third year in Puebla, Mexico. I graduated with a First Class Honours degree in 2005 and then landed a fully funded internship to work with Indigenous women's groups in Nicaragua, Ecuador and Colombia.

I then applied for a Masters in Post-War Reconstruction at the RMCC in Kingston, and decided to travel to Europe before the beginning of the academic session. I completed a Postgraduate Degree in Education in the UK and am now in my tenth year as a teacher of French and Spanish in a secondary school in Scotland.

Presently, my title is Principal Teacher Global Education and IBDP Coordinator at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, Scotland. Half of my time is dedicated to teaching languages, and the remainder is dedicated to coordinating the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. I also lead as well as setting up the school's exchange programme to most continents, designing and delivering interdisciplinary courses for Sec 1 and Sec 2 students, and looking after our gap year students. In addition, I help run the Model United Nations Club, so that's a little bit of a link with the past. It's a good school with a very QHS feel to it, and it has been very good to me both professionally and personally over the last decade.

The vast majority of my QHS teachers played a role, however small. I certainly think about how I was taught during that period of my life and model myself on certain individuals. Without a doubt. Mme Couturier is first among these certainly because of the common subject (and I do Bescherelle verb tests in her honour!), and Ms. Fillatre's humanity, warmth and proximity to the student body is something I continue to aspire to. I am under no illusions that my pupils will not remember more than a few details of what I have taught them, but they will always remember if I was kind to them or made them feel valued. This is what my teachers at QHS did for me and the reason I flourished there.

I think a lot of my confidence and 'go get 'em' attitude stems from being in a small school where I could have an impact and where those positive role models were within touching distance. I remember the Student Council retreat in 1995/96 vividly, and in particular

how the older pupils took every single younger member under their wing and very much into the family fold, making you feel like a part of something worthwhile, giving us an equal voice. We talk a lot about 'pupil voice' in education at the moment, and I really think QHS did that exceptionally well.

Although I didn't feel stretched academically (aside from Math 536!), the 'soft skills' I developed because of the smaller school atmosphere has stood me in good stead and are arguably more valuable.

When I dig a little deeper, I know my greatest joy is my family and my desired career would have led to many sacrifices I am not willing to make now. I guess it's all about finding contentment in the here and now rather than, what might have been.

My message: Be kind. It's what most matters, wherever you go or whatever you choose to do. Bend over backwards for people, go the extra mile, be selfless; it seldom is the wrong thing to do. Go forth with courage and faith.