

Buonas noches. Guten abend. Buona sera. Bonsoir. Good evening. I am Elizabeth Burroughs. Not many students can say they have learned, or even partially learned, languages such as Spanish, German, Italian, and French. But during my time here at Meadow I have studied these foreign languages and the cultures associated with them. To me, this is one thing that makes Meadow special – the foreign language program that starts in preschool.

I became a part of the Meadow Montessori family when I was only two years old - 13 years ago. I say “family” and not “school” because to me, the teachers, staff, and students, at Meadow are more like family to me. I have grown up with them and everyone here has played an important part in that process. I have learned so many things through the years, from reading and writing, to solving the quadratic formula and learning the differences in map projections. One thing that sets Meadow apart from other schools in my mind is that the teachers here do not only teach you academic subjects--such as math, science, and history--but also the many skills that can be used outside of school. I have learned basic skills such as tying my shoes, picking up after myself, using words to solve problems, and some not-so-basic skills such as driving a tractor, building a sidewalk for a school in Belize, climbing mountains in Wyoming, experiencing the culture and learning how to travel in the busy cities of Milwaukee, Washington DC, and Montreal. I have even learned the proper way to throw a shot-put and participated on the first high school girls’ basketball team at this school. In so many ways this school has prepared me for life later on when I am on my own, taking care of myself.

I owe much of my basic and necessary skills to my preschool teacher, Miss Lisa. Who knew being potty trained was such an essential? Many of you who know Miss Lisa may know that she has beautiful handwriting. Her handwriting must have rubbed off on me when she taught me how to write because my handwriting is pretty legible and neat if I do say so myself.

When I was younger, I was one of those students who disliked and had difficulties with reading, and Ms. Darcy could see this. She helped and encouraged me to keep reading. Eventually after persevering and reading more, I grew to like it, and now, I love reading. Another skill Ms. Darcy taught me was memorizing dates. At the time, I did not see a significance in remembering dates, but as I got older, I realized that remembering important dates in history helps you to put things in perspective. It helps you to correlate subjects with other subjects by looking at the time period. To this day, I still remember those important dates.

Entering the middle school room seemed a privilege to me. The teachers treated me like I was a young adult, and I was, and still am becoming one. We did so many new things, like traveling and farm program. Each year, the class takes a fall trip and a spring trip, and every time I went on one of these trips I began to get this feeling of independence, which made me feel like I could be able to do well in the “real” world later on. Farm program also gave me a feeling of independence. I was able to drive a tractor. I felt like I was on top of the world! That of course was not the ONLY reason farm program gave me a sense of independence. In farm, you grow and cook your own food. You get to

experience nature and all the bugs with it. Farm program gives you a sense of self-sustainability, not having to rely on others to provide basic essentials for you.

I do not think I would have been able to go through the middle school classroom without the help of three teachers: Ms. Pat, Mr. Kevin, and Ms. Cathe. Each teacher has left me with gifts useful to later on in life, gifts such as love of learning, generosity, and acceptance of other people and their cultures.

If you have ever met Ms. Pat, you will realize how much she loves to learn and how generous and kind she is. She is so willing to share her knowledge with others, even after school gets out at 3:30. Many teachers love to learn, but how many will go out of their way to help their students outside of the classroom? Not many. Ms. Pat has inspired me to share my love of learning with others.

Mr. Kevin is a very cultured person. He has traveled to many places around the world and is also fluent in four languages. He teaches French and Spanish. I take Spanish. Mr. Kevin is always recommending books in Spanish that I should read and always finding ways in which I can improve my Spanish. Not many teachers take time to help a student enhance their ability to learn. Do not be surprised in 10 or 15 years when I am the greatest Spanish speaker ever. Just kidding. But I do owe a lot of it to Mr. Kevin.

Then there is Ms. Cathe. I do not know where to begin. It is inspiring to see a teacher who has such a love of learning and knows so much. She helps me see that there is so much out there to learn and I have so many opportunities to develop my knowledge. Whenever I tell her that she is a genius who knows everything, you know what she says? First she says, "I do not know everything." Then she says, "Where do you think it comes from? I have to learn the same way you do." I think that is what "inspires" me. She had to work hard to learn the things she knows. If she could do it, then maybe I can too.

As you can see tonight, music is very important here at Meadow. We have five music teachers now, which is great--the more the merrier. I have two violin teachers, Mrs. Holoway and Mrs. Bloomberg. They are amazing violinists and give me wonderful tips to improve my playing. Besides teaching skills such as proper bow-hold, vibrato, dynamics, and intonation, they have taught me to persevere and keep practicing, because practice can only make things easier. Witnessing teachers who can play music and know so much about it historically has made me want to learn more about music.

Besides playing the violin, I also play the piano. Mrs. Lentner is an amazing piano teacher. She has tolerated many ups and downs with me throughout the years. There have been numerous times when I have wanted to quit playing the piano. I tried telling her and I would get so frustrated with her for not letting me quit. But after each time she convinced me to keep playing, I would feel so grateful that she did not give up on me. She could have just said, "Ok, quit. I have other students who I can teach," but instead she said, "You have the potential to be a great piano player and you are just at a stage when you want to give up but you will get over that stage. If you quit, you will

regret it later on.” And Mrs. Lentner was, of course, correct. I would have regretted it so much. I love playing the piano. So, thank you Mrs. Lentner, for not giving up on me.

There are also some staff members who play a huge role in keeping this school in shape. It takes a lot of work to run a school, provide food for all the students, and to organize school events. I have witnessed the amount of stress and difficulty the staff workers go through. With the work and help of Ms. Barb, Ms. Val, Ms. Jenny, Ms. Paula, Ms. Heidi, Ms. Teresa, Ms. Cathe, and a few others, our school is able to run more smoothly and I appreciate all you do for us at Meadow.

There are two other groups of people who have been an important source of inspiration and support throughout the years. All of my friends, especially Delaney Preston, Madde Baron-Galbavi, and Madelyn Abraham, have shared with me many moments of laughter, happiness, and fun, as well as always being there to give me advice and support.

Last but not least, my family, the ones who will always be there for me. Not just because it is in the “handbook,” but because they choose to support and encourage me. Yes, we may have our ups and downs, but we work them out and come out stronger than before. I am not a person who likes to say these words, but I love them so much and as silly and emotional as they may be, I would not have it any other way.

In the beginning of my speech, I say that Meadow is my family. I say this because all around me I have people who are willing to go the extra mile to help others grow as a person. I think that is what a family is: People who help and influence you to become a well-rounded person. Here at Meadow, we are a family. We encourage each other to be the best they can be. We have students who willingly lend hands to others when needed. We have teachers who go the distance to make sure their students are being challenged, reaching their full potential, and will always maintain a love of learning throughout life. These past 13 years have been a wonderful adventure. To all of you who have made this possible, I say, Gracias. Danke. Grazie. Merci. Thank you.

Elizabeth Burroughs, age 13