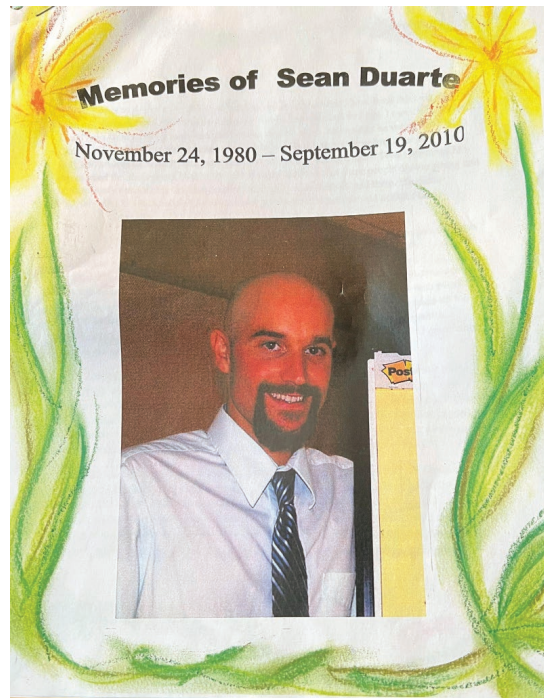


DEDICATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE SEAN DUARTE STORY OF A BEGINNING TEACHER



Background

I first met Sean Duarte when he applied to be part of a new teacher program I was leading called TEACH! SouthCoast! As soon as I met him, I knew he had the disposition and perspective we needed in this profession.

I am dedicating this book to Sean because when I was his professor, he not only touched my heart but also the hearts of all of the teachers in our cohort. His humor, quirky personality, dedication to becoming a teacher, and, yes, his love of tea kept all of us on our toes. Yes, he made us feel guilty if we used the elevator instead of the stairs.

We only knew him from the August kickoff to September. In this one short month, we recognized his genius and love of life. His premature death at twenty-nine years of age left all of us stunned.

I choose to share his memory and message because I want you all to keep encouraging people like Sean to enter our profession. He was an engineer, a career changer, who wanted to make a difference, and I know he would have had an impact on the students in his classroom. He left us too soon, and that is why we must continue to shape our profession with those aspiring teachers like him.

An Excerpt From Sean's Application

My commitment to teach in an urban location would equate with a commitment to reconnect to my own community. I am a Taunton, Massachusetts, native who spent my early years in the Highland Hills housing projects and went through the local school system until my high school years.

There have been notable life experiences, which have guided me in my decision to alter my current professional life trajectory as an engineer.

The following bullet list notes these experiences in life occurrence succession:

- I was born into a house of lower privilege but was able to see how the power of motivation and hard work can achieve great results. My family eventually made it out of the housing projects and was able to provide me a place to stay and food to eat while I saved up to pay for college.
- During high school, I had an inspirational history instructor, who, while teaching subject matter, was able to teach logical thought processes to the students. I have used this thought style throughout my personal and professional life. Basically, this process was an early introduction to logic as taught in a college philosophy class.
- Right out of high school, in the summer of 1999, I was involved in a project related to a city sewer system. This project required me to enter the basement of most buildings, dwellings, businesses, etc. within the city of Brockton, Massachusetts. To achieve this, I walked the streets with a team member going house to house, seeking entrance into basements. One day, while attempting a house inspection, we encountered a six-year-old boy who helped translate our words into his family's native Haitian language. The next day, my teammate and I went back to the little boy's neighborhood to continue inspections. When we got out of the car, we found him playing a potato sack game outside in a trash bag because he had no good quality toys. Despite his misfortune, he was eager to aid us by translating our words into his neighbors' Cape Verdean, creole language. I have often thought about the little boy's ability to speak three languages at the age of six. His potential for success as a trilingual person was great, and I hope he had teachers that supported his abilities.

Please allow me to fulfill the next steps to obtaining my professional goal of developing logical and mathematically outfitted members of society and providing rewarding experiences and positive energy to the life of others by accepting me into your TEACH! SouthCoast graduate program.

An Example of Sean's Brilliant Mind

In this assignment, a word list was provided to the teachers, and they were asked to use ten or more in an essay to demonstrate their understanding. Of course, Sean used all 29 words! Here is a sample showing some of the words he used.

I am sold on **brain-based learning**. It makes sense to me that immersion, relaxed awareness (meditative mind style), and active processing (make the info your own) lead to learning. My mind works in hierarchies, so I *will* consider the **theory of multiple intelligences** (states there are eight intelligences), the **style delineator approach**, and **Bloom's taxonomy**, (a.k.a. classification scheme). Although the latter is important, it is of lesser importance in my mind.

From class speeches and readings, I am equally sold that **back planning**, although proving to be very difficult, is the superior way to connect state curriculum and frameworks with district **scope and sequence** determinations to produce bang up goals and coherent **unit plans** and **lesson plans**. Even with the best laid schemes, some students *will* learn certain things at a different pace, depending on things such as these: their mastery of the **English language** and whether they've been labelled **gifted and talented** or have **individualized education programs** (that may have been a result of a state's **special needs legislation**).

Being a math guy, I am going to try being a math guy. I am going to have to try and incorporate **authentic assessments** (less concrete) over **formal assessments** (traditional tests and quizzes somewhat similar to **standardized tests**). Also, a bit foreign to me will be the use of a more open-ended, but still defined, **rubric** style of grading.

I will try to use **informal assessments** to tweak lesson and unit plans based on observations and subtle feedback I perceive linked to student understanding. Ultimately, through use of various techniques learned through this program, I would like to create a **student-centered community** where I can appear like a school Zen master to those that walk into my classroom.

Memories of Sean

Here are two pieces of writing to show how much Sean meant to his peers and professors.

●●● MEMORIES OF SEAN

BY A MEMBER OF OUR TEACH! SOUTHCOAST COHORT 4 (2010)

I want to reflect on Sean today. I feel I owe him my words, thoughts, and feelings. I also owe the children who would have been learning from him. He was the teacher they deserve, the teacher he would have been.

Quietly, I have been mourning Sean's death—not because he was a close friend, because I have only known him for a short time, but because of what his death represents to me. His death has represented the short, sweet bliss of a life and the very true fact that some people die too young and unfortunately are not able to share their amazing gifts with those around them. His death represents the fact that people you admire may not be there tomorrow, and we should not take moments with them for granted.

Sean is on my mind often during the day. This has changed my attitude in the classroom in many ways. I make sure that I make some meaningful conversation with every child each day. I pay attention to the children who have so much to say, even if it takes up too much of my time, because it is from those children that we find brilliance and eloquence. I remember to laugh at the small things . . . pick my battles. And as the personal time I spent with Shawn has shown me, I have been super organized!

I feel awkward being hit so hard by the death of someone I have known only since August, but I feel like I have lost a dear friend. I have spent many nights wondering why I cry out of nowhere for him, and suddenly, it hit me. I may not have lost this dear friend of mine, but I have lost someone who shared such a great passion for what I find so important and significant. Sean would have made a great teacher. His inquisitive nature was something I admired. His thirst for knowledge and love for math was something else we shared.

This cohort means so much to me, and since day one, I have said that my favorite part of working with teachers is learning from their beautiful minds. I will miss his mind and truly appreciate the minds of the teachers still with us who are working so hard to make a difference in the world we live in.

I thank Sean for changing me as a teacher and as a human being. I will continue to think of him in every class, and when things get really hard, I will remind myself that I am living, and while I'm living, I have the ability to share my gifts . . . and not take them for granted. ●

●●● A TRIBUTE TO SEAN DUARTE

BY KRISTEN LEE (FACULTY, TEACH! SOUTHCOAST)

Quiet dawn

Loss irreconcilable

Questions abound

Answers unfound

Is the world worse with you gone

Or better because you were here?

Better. Worse. Both.

Sunset fades

Void so grey

Waves of doubt wash over

How to carry on

Never the same

Always missed

Always. Never. Always.

Starry night

Fractured heart

Tears with smile

Your joy remains bright

Cherished forever

Unforgotten friend

Cherished. Unforgotten. Cherished. ●