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February 9, 2016

Dear Grade 9 students,

Welcome to the second semester, the last half of your first year here at St. James Collegiate! I hope you had a good first semester and that you're excited about this one. There's lots more to learn and do this year, and I really hope that I can help to make it fun and productive.

This is my third year at St. James Collegiate, and I'm really enjoying it. Most of my time teaching before this was in middle school, first at Hedges, then for 5 years at École Golden Gate. I did my practice teaching at George Waters, and before that I had some elementary school experience at Mulvey School and Strathmillan. Teaching has been a lot of fun, and I learn so much every day. It's never dull, never the same thing twice, and always an adventure. It's also a LOT of work. I spend so much time at night and on the weekend marking, planning, and getting things ready for my classes. It's good, but sometimes it's super stressful. I still wouldn't trade it for anything.

I've had a lot of other jobs in my life, including the usual jobs as a young person, babysitting, delivering papers, and working at restaurants. My goal in life was to be on the radio. (My mother still hopes that I'm going to become a doctor some day, but it's not happening!) In high school, I took a great broadcasting program, and right afterward, I started working in radio and television. Eventually I got tired of it and realized that it wasn't as glamorous, and certainly didn't pay as well as I hoped. I got a "real" job delivering auto body supplies. While stable, secure, and somewhat enjoyable, I really missed working with people, and really wanted to help people, especially kids. I started taking courses in the Early Childhood Education program at Red River College, and got a job at a daycare centre.

Working with kids was way more fun and so much more interesting than anything I'd done before. I really enjoyed it. Unfortunately, working in a daycare is tough because those hard working people don't get paid much, and there are a lot of hassles that come with the job; society doesn't have nearly as much respect for those people as they deserve. Eventually I ran out of excuses, and decided to enroll in university at The University of Winnipeg. That was the most amazing, life changing experience ever. I loved university (at times) because I met so many neat people and learned all kinds of interesting things. It's tough, for sure, but at the time I didn't have any idea just how hard the real world would be!

But work and education are just part of my life. I love my job and the things I learn and do, but they would mean nothing without my family. I have a lovely wife and 3 amazing kids. They are 18, 15, and 7, and they make life so much more fun and meaningful. We love to take trips in the summer, go bike riding, play at the park, and much more. Most of the time these days, we just watch TV shows on Netflix together, but we like to play games and go out for dinner, and to movies and concerts together. We actually host concerts in our house all the time, when my musical friends come over to play music and I invite all kinds of people over for a show. Those are a lot of fun.

That leads me to my passion in life, which is music. When I was younger, I spent a lot of time alone. My parents split up when I was young, and I lived with my mother and my younger brother. My mother got cancer shortly after my parents split up, and she spent a lot of time in and out of the

hospital. It's a miracle that she's alive today, so the stress and anxiety of that situation made it tough to be happy and make friends. For me, music was my closest friend, and my biggest comfort. I could never make music (I tried when I was younger, but realized that I'm too lazy to practice), so I really appreciate the people who have the talent and determination to share their music with the world. I collect all kinds of music and love to share it with others. I make compilations for my friends, invite them to shows, recommend music that I love, and even take to the airwaves to share music and information on the radio. That's been a real joy for me. I've been actively involved at UMFM at the University of Manitoba for over a decade, and I can't imagine life without radio. I've made so many friends through radio, listeners, fellow DJs, and especially musicians.

That's unusual for me, because I've always been a shy, quiet person. When I was younger, I didn't have many friends, usually one at a time, and had a really hard time getting to know people. I still do. I have always struggled with depression and anxiety in my life, but having things that I enjoy and things that I know a lot about has really helped. I'm still sad and tired and worried a lot, but being around happy people really helps, and sharing my knowledge and passions makes me happy.

I have a couple of other physical ailments as well, I'm almost entirely deaf in my left ear, and I have a form of arthritis that makes life more difficult than I'd like it to be. I try not to let those things get me down, and try to overcome any limitations that may get in my way.

Overall, I like to think that I'm a kind and generous person; I really enjoy helping people and doing things for others. I love to volunteer and donate time and money, and just help out however I can. It means a lot to me to be able to teach people things, do things for others that they might not be able to do for themselves, or just do something that makes people laugh or feel good.

I also like to ramble on sometimes... They call me long-winded. I hope I haven't bored you too much. I appreciate you reading this and especially appreciate whatever you're willing to share about yourself.

Please come talk to me any time you have a problem or a question, whether it's about this class or any other.

Thanks for reading and for your efforts so far and over the rest of the semester.

Sincerely,

Mr. Robson