

# Zachary Petzel

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## Welcome to my eFolio!

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Hello! My name is Zachary Petzel and I am currently a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics Teaching so that in the future, I can successfully teach students the importance of different mathematical concepts in a high school setting. Someday, I plan to attain a Master's Degree in Education and perhaps go on to become a high school principal in order to fully make a difference in the education and lives of children.

## Mission Statement

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I will strive for excellence in every area of my academic, professional, and personal life. I will seek to question and understand problems in order to develop solutions that will benefit others.

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# Zachary Petzel

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## Personal Info

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I was born to Randy and Judy Petzel of Arlington, MN on September, 14th, 1993. I also have two brothers, Ben and Jordan. I attended St. Paul's Lutheran School from Pre-K until 8th grade. After St. Paul's, I went to Sibley East Public School for my secondary education. Currently, I am attending Minnesota State University, Mankato majoring in Secondary Mathematics Education. To learn more about my past education experiences, please view my education page.

Outside of school, I enjoy playing sports of all kinds with my friends and family, especially golf. I also enjoy reading, riding my bike, watching movies, fishing, and trapping.

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## Honors Learning Community Coordinator

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New Student and Family Programs

**Start Date** August 19, 2013 - May 9, 2014

My responsibilities included: planning and implementing Honors, academic success, faculty interaction, career exploration, and community development programs as well as providing and directing students to appropriate resources to support their academic success.

## Mathematics Tutor

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Student Support Services

**Start Date** August 26, 2013 - May 9, 2014

My responsibilities included: providing each tutee with individual tutoring that includes assistance with course content and academic success skills while building the student's self-confidence, academic ability, and personal responsibility.

## Summer Live-in Tutor/Counselor

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Upward Bound

**Start Date** June 17, 2013 - July 26, 2013

My responsibilities included: maintaining a positive living-learning environment that recognizes academic and personal success, leading participants in a variety of social activities, and assisting students with their summer coursework.

## Mathematics Tutor

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**Employment Type** Part Time

Center for Academic Success

**Industry** Education, Training, and Library

**Start Date** August 27, 2012

As a math tutor, I assist students on either a one-on-one basis or in a group setting. I help students understand the material in their college math courses by working through example problems with them, conversing with them about concepts, and reviewing with them before quizzes and tests. Students leave the tutoring session feeling confident, having the ability to solve the problems assigned to them in class.

## Grocery Store Night Manager

### **Employment Type** Part Time

Jerry's Home Quality Foods

**Industry** Management

**Start Date** June 22, 2009 - August 10, 2012

My responsibilities included: assisting customers, cashiering, overseeing the work of other employees, answering customers' questions, handling and counting money, training in new employees, and closing the store at the end of the night.

#### **Contacts & References**

[Kurt Becker](#)

## **Maintenance Helper**

### **Employment Type** Part Time

City of Henderson

**Industry** Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance

**Start Date** June 22, 2010 - August 27, 2010

My responsibilities included: maintaining city-owned property by mowing lawns, cleaning streets, trimming trees and bushes, and painting curbs.

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## The Honors Program at MSU-Mankato

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The Honors program at Minnesota State University, Mankato focuses on three main competencies: leadership, research, and global citizenship. Members of the program take courses and participate in a variety of activities in order to develop themselves in these three areas.

I chose to join the Honors Program at MSU-Mankato because I wanted to get the most out of my college experience. I wanted to challenge myself academically and take advantage of the learning opportunities that the Honors Program offers through their advanced curriculum. I also wanted to surround myself with a group of scholars that were serious about their education and who would support me on the road to success.

## Personal Learning Plans

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### **2014-2015 Learning Plan.rtf**

5/29/2015 12:04:15 PM  
60632 bytes

In this learning plan, I have identified my goals for the 2014-2015 academic year at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### **2013-2014 Learning Plan.rtf**

5/30/2014 1:09:47 PM  
55895 bytes

In this learning plan, I have identified my goals for the 2013-2014 academic year.

### **2012-2013 Learning Plan.rtf**

10/5/2012 1:24:22 AM  
57175 bytes

In this learning plan, I have identified my goals for the 2012-2013 academic year.



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## Leadership

During my time in college, I have been fortunate to have been able to take on multiple leadership roles through various organizations and work experiences as well as learn about leadership in various courses. From taking these classes and serving in these positions, I have gained extensive knowledge and practice in becoming an effective leader. I believe that there exists many different leadership styles, but all effective leaders are skilled communicators, able to harness peoples' strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses, and can be flexible in their plans in order to adapt to unexpected changes.

Through my experiences on the leadership team for [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#), a student organization and campus ministry here at MSU and also through my job as the [Honors Learning Community Coordinator](#), I learned about the importance of communication within leadership. By working closely with other student leaders to plan and run different events, I found out just how vital communication is within a team of people. When there is a breakdown in communication, many of the members of a team will fail to be on the same page and the result will inevitably cause some amount of tension within the group. On the contrary, when there is effective communication, everyone feels more confident in their abilities and knows the roles they need to play in order to create and maintain a successful event.

The biggest lesson that I have learned about leadership is that an effective leader is able to identify and use peoples' strengths in order to complete a task the most smoothly. Some leaders may try to sharpen the less developed attributes they see in their followers in an attempt to eliminate weaknesses in the group, but this tends to just be an inefficient use of peoples' time, energy, and resources. By serving on [InterVarsity's Leadership team](#) and also by acting as an [Honors Program mentor](#), I have witnessed firsthand how people have been gifted with certain traits and excel in roles where they are able to capitalize on their strengths. For example, I personally shine in positions where I am required to interact positively with people and make them feel welcome in a new environment. I do not mind taking on other roles at times, but these are the ones in which I feel confident in my abilities and therefore I perform them with more enthusiasm since I actually enjoy what I am doing.

Since leaders have a group of followers depending on them to make key decisions and provide direction, I believe that effective leaders must plan for success in all that they do. More importantly though, they must be flexible in order to adapt to unexpected changes that threaten to corrupt their plans. As a [math tutor](#) and [summer school teacher](#), I have learned to become flexible with my students when it comes to the way I explain mathematical concepts and deliver lessons to them. Even though I might believe that I taught a mathematical concept or skill very well, it might not be enough to actually get my students to learn the information. If I find in my assessment of their understanding of the content that they still have misconceptions or are struggling to grasp a concept, I need to always provide support by using a new

approach or explaining the material in a different way.

I believe that effective leaders have superior communication skills, an ability to harness peoples' strengths, and flexibility in the plans that they create and implement in various leadership roles. Even though I understand a lot about how to be an effective leader, I know that leading a group of people is something that can always be improved upon. Therefore I strive to continuously improve these skills in order to positively direct my future leadership actions.

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## Research

Over the course of my undergraduate career at MSU, I have engaged in different research opportunities that have developed my knowledge and skills as a researcher. In particular, I have grown in the area of information literacy, learned about the process of conducting research, and worked on extending the knowledge or practice of my discipline through the dissemination of the results of my research.

During the fall semester of my sophomore year, I took the Honors class entitled, *Research and Information Literacy*, which greatly helped me to grow in the area of information literacy. I learned how to navigate different databases to find journal articles, evaluate the credibility of sources, and use specific search functions to find certain information contained within academic journals. I was able to put these information literacy skills to use the following year as I began working on the [Upward Bound Research Project](#), in which I searched through the library's online databases to find numerous academic journals and articles that had data from empirical studies related to Upward Bound programs in the U.S. After seeing the vast amount of information available in these databases as well as on the internet, I realized just how essential it is to not only be able to successfully find articles related to a topic, but also to be able to effectively evaluate these sources quickly to determine if they actually contain pertinent information that one can use for a research project.

Research does not always consist of simply gathering and synthesizing information related to a research topic, but rather it can be a complex process that involves the collection and analysis of data in an experiment that needs to be done in an ethical manner. Through numerous experiments in [Physics Labs](#), I learned many valuable lessons about the process of conducting ethical research. One lesson that I learned is that a researcher must always be as accurate as possible when collecting and recording data. If some of the data is even slightly inaccurate, there is a potential risk for the entire results of the experiment to be skewed. Similarly, while I was completing my [literature review](#) for the *Research and Information Literacy* class, I learned about the importance of forming a point of view based upon the literature behind a research topic and being careful not to just use sources that support my hypothesis.

Since I have not yet conducted original research nor been able to disseminate the results of a research project, I am unable to say at this point that I have actually extended the knowledge or practice of my discipline. I am currently working on a [research project](#) in collaboration with the Center for Academic Success (CAS) and have the goal of presenting my team's findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in spring 2016. We plan to facilitate four sessions in which students that receive tutoring services can participate and share their experiences with the CAS in order to provide us with qualitative data to conduct our study. Since the results of my team's study will help inform the CAS on how to improve their current tutoring services, I know that our research

project will extend the CAS's knowledge of the effectiveness of the tutoring services they provide to MSU students.

All of the knowledge and skills that I have acquired regarding research will certainly benefit me in the future as a teacher. I will always seek to find the best instructional methods or classroom management strategies to meet the needs of my students. In addition, I will collect data using both informal and formal methods to assess my students' understanding of the content. Finally, I will use the results of these assessments to inform my future instruction in order to enhance the learning that takes place in my classroom.

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## Global Citizenship

As a future graduate from Minnesota State University, Mankato, I will be entering an increasingly interconnected world where there is a high demand for global citizens who have the ability to successfully navigate other cultures and possess skills in being culturally competent. I believe that I have gained these skills as a global citizen through various classes on culture, the study of a second language, short-term cultural immersion trips, as well as extended cultural experiences.

I have built a foundational view of culture and how to be a global citizen in today's world mostly through two different courses that I have taken at MSU. In [KSP220W: Human Relations in a Multicultural Society](#), I learned that culture is more than just a person's race or ethnic background, but rather each individual has their own unique culture which stems from numerous factors such as ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, exceptionality, language, religion, and geography. Through the honors course entitled, [HONR401: Becoming a Global Citizen](#), I was able to work directly with students from other cultures on a group project and analyze not only how their cultural practices impacted the dynamics of the group, but also how my own culture played a role in this as well. My biggest takeaway from these two classes is that throughout my life, I should never stop seeking out opportunities to improve my global citizenship skills by engaging with people from other cultures, whether that's by holding a conversation with an international student on campus or through traveling to a foreign country and living amongst the locals for a long period of time.

As a part of the Honors Program, all students are required to learn a second language. I chose to take courses in [American Sign Language](#) (ASL), and learn a language in which I knew nothing about to challenge myself. By learning American Sign Language, I have gained an appreciation of a culture that I never knew previously existed, that is, the Deaf culture. Taking classes where the professor was deaf and thus communicated entirely in ASL enabled me to recognize that I have a hard time swallowing my pride sometimes and asking for help when I do not understand something. I also learned that language is such an important cultural component and that communication between people is often more nonverbal than verbal most of the time. For example, I have observed that communication between deaf people is very different from the way hearing people communicate with one another. Deaf people communicate in a very expressive manner, using a variety of signs and exaggerated facial expressions to express themselves. They also tend to be very direct in their communication and will tell you exactly what they are thinking without beating around the bush. After witnessing the communication style of the Deaf sub-culture, I was eager to learn not only just about other cultures around me, but also those in other parts of the United States and the world.

I was able to travel abroad for the first time through an Honors course called, [HONR450: Service-Learning in Belize](#). By spending a week living in San

Pedro, Belize and immersing myself in the culture, I was able to experience firsthand different elements of the Belizean culture including their food, history, values, traditions, education, and lifestyle. Through my short-term service experience through the [Milwaukee Urban Program](#), I realized just how much poverty and brokenness exists in the inner city within our country and how much I cared about doing something to help remedy the situation. As a result of this trip, I accepted a position to teach [summer school in Milwaukee](#) this past summer, and I was excited to make a difference in the lives of many children from families living in the inner city. During the summer, I lived and worked in Milwaukee for about 7 weeks, and I learned that a person's culture is such an important lens through which they perceive the world. Therefore, in order to fully reach these students while teaching, I needed to truly embrace their culture to understand where they come from and how to best teach them according to their diverse individual needs.

Going into the field of education thrills me because I have the opportunity to harness the global citizenship skills that I have acquired by putting them into practice every day in my classroom. Each of my students is diverse in their own way and has their own unique cultural background. As their teacher, my job will be to craft my lesson plans and adapt my teaching methods to the diverse needs of my students in order to provide them with the best possible learning experience. Even though I certainly do not have a full understanding of all cultures, I believe I possess the skills to be able to identify and appreciate different elements of a person's culture as well as seek resources to be able to address cultural differences in an appropriate manner if necessary.

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