Questions. I am full of them, and oftentimes they seem to be all that surround me. I have been this way as long as I can remember. Backtrack ten years ago-I was at the zoo with my uncle. Somebody should’ve told my uncle to brace himself because this little girl did not cease a single moment. I asked him over 100 questions. The process would work like this: I would ask my uncle a question, he would respond appropriately, I would contemplate the response for a couple of moments, and lastly, I would present him with yet another question relating to his response. My uncle told me this story a few weeks ago. The funny thing is now I have more questions that I am sure not even my ten-year-old self could fathom…

Back when I was a naïve high school student, I noticed teachers, principals, and other professionals relating education with school. I quietly listened as adults lectured about the importance of going to school and “receiving and education.” Their viewpoints formed concepts in my mind. Education must mean learning. Learning was what happened in school. Teachers taught lessons. Lessons were meant to teach something meaningful. I was learning, right? But sometimes I sat through class experiencing everything but learning. Sometimes all “education” felt like was Wood-Ridge High School, an institution with rules, regulations, and lists. I watched as my math teacher wrote “decorative” equations on the board, but my attention soon shifted to the squirrels just outside the window of the four walls I was in. I wondered why they chased each other, and wondered what life would be like as a squirrel.

Unlike most of my peers, I did not go to college straight after high school. I took a year off to pursue one of my innermost desires: traveling. The west coast embraced me with open arms, and I embraced it back. West-coasters tend to have a slower lifestyle, which I thoroughly enjoyed. For once, I could breathe fresh air, clear my mind, and explore my curiosities. In retrospect, I’ve come to realize education is more than school. Education is a journey of joy,
confusion, and everything in between. I believe all the answers to my never-ending questions are within me. Education is no longer an experience only limited to school. It can happen anywhere and at any time—and often it happens in the more unlikely places. In fact, I experienced education in Osaka, Japan, just a couple of months ago. My teacher was my cousin’s daughter—a child two years of age. With few words exchanged between the two of us, I learned the beauty of simplicity, authenticity, and love.

J.R.R. Tolkien once said, “Not all those that wander are lost.” Though I frequently feel overwhelmed with what with what I’m meant to be doing with my life, I feel like I am not lost despite the fact that I may often feel so. Whether we realize it or not, with every day comes clarity, growth, mistakes, victories, and new experiences. Education, however, is a gradual process that must be chosen in order to be effective. Nobody can give one an education. There are a range of tools all around us that can provide ways to educate us, but it is up to the individual to receive it.

Most importantly, education is about walking through the open doors in your life with a heart of open-mindedness, respect, and wonder. At this moment, I am happily enjoying my perplexing, wondrous, and blessed life. The field of Occupational Therapy has captured my heart, and I am excited to delve deeper into my studies. People are my passion, and I feel that every single individual is capable of doing anything they set their mind to. Some of them just need a little help. Specifically, I would like to work with people with visual disabilities. A visual disability can severely impair the process of learning. The choice of an education is a gift, and it is my desire to ensure that everyone can have the opportunity to experience it. I owe my dreams, desires, and success to what has become one of the most important aspects of my life: Education.