

# Brian: Pursuing a Passion for Teaching

## Background

Brian is 23 years old, lives near Boston, Massachusetts, and has autism. Brian is committed to doing what he sets his mind to, and willing to take on new challenges. Since middle school, Brian has been interested in working in a school and has engaged in a range of **career exploration** activities to see what that experience might be like. Brian hopes to become a teacher's assistant or an art teacher someday.

## What's Important:

Growing up, Brian's family encouraged him and made sure he had opportunities to explore and discover his interests. As Brian's mom put it, *"I need to listen to this young person, find something they like and then be able to help them, not tell them what they're going to do, but help them kind of move towards it."* This, she noted, allows youth to explore their interests and build and expand their skillsets.

Brian's interest in becoming an assistant teacher also started while he was in middle school. After Brian's art teacher noticed how talented he was, they started involving him in assisting with the younger children's classes. In Brian's high school, each senior is expected to complete an internship before graduation. With support from his family and the school, Brian got an internship as an assistant to the music teacher. As part of his internship, Brian helped the music



## What is Career Exploration?

Career exploration just means investigating and experiencing different work situations. It means learning about different jobs and how they might fit with your interests and skills. The goal is to learn about all kinds of careers and interests. Career exploration can help you learn the right job match or "fit". Career exploration can help you figure out your strengths and interests.

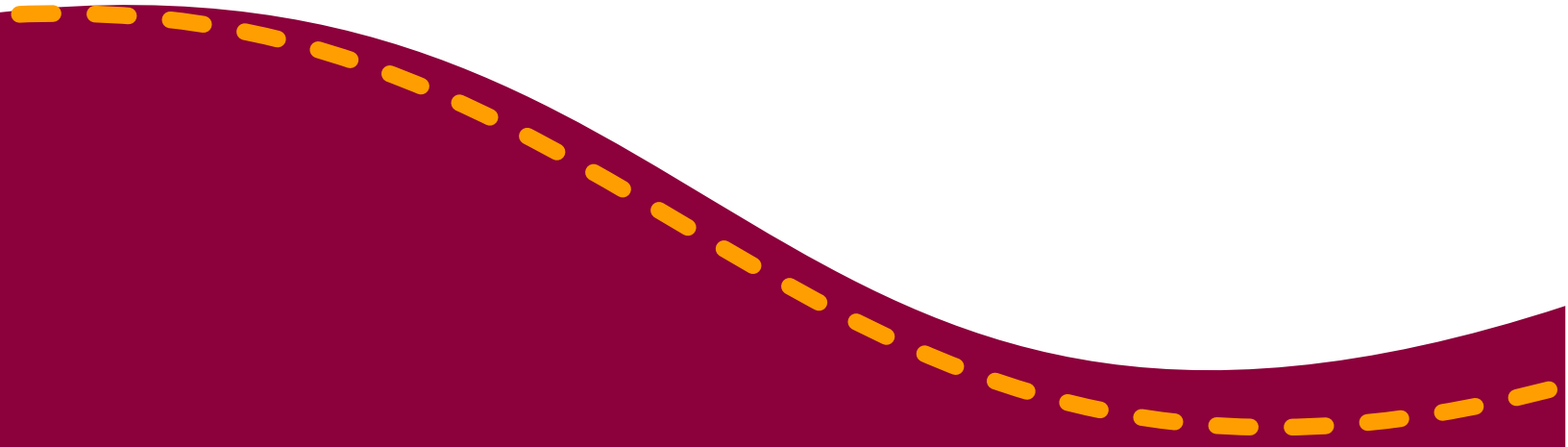
teacher prepare for class, take attendance, hand out instruments and class materials, and complete other related tasks. Brian took his responsibilities seriously and was very successful.

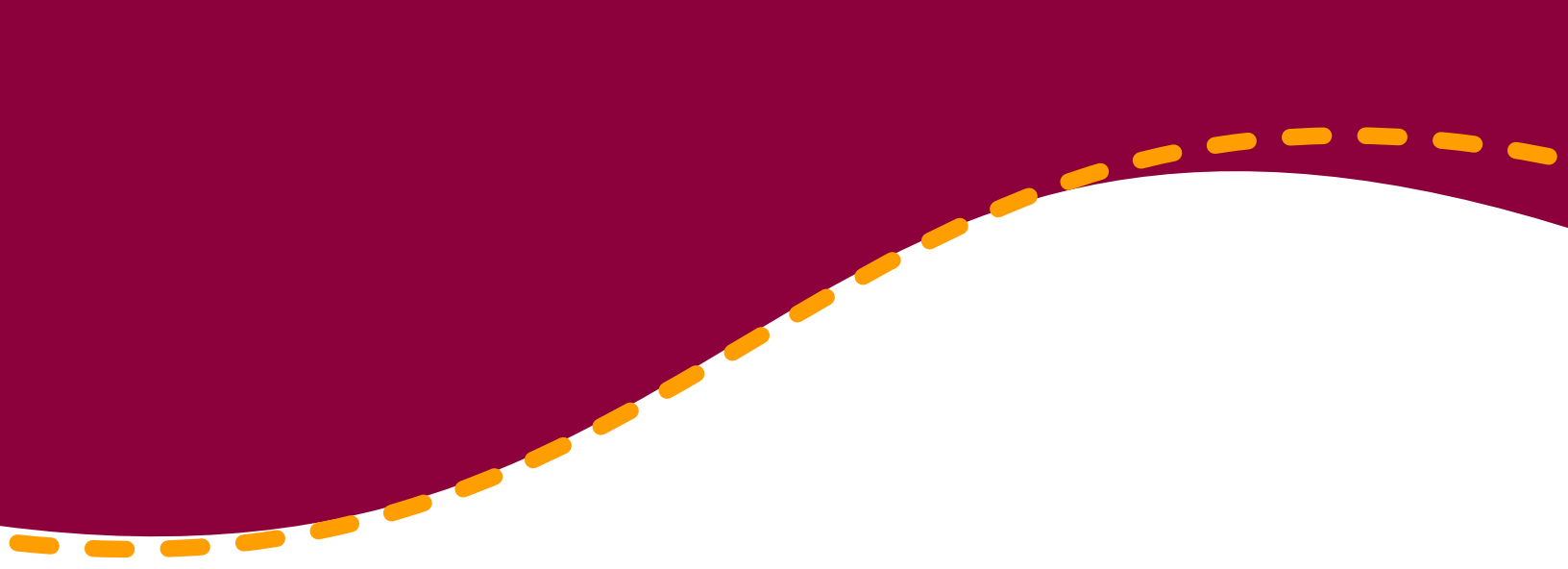
As it turned out, this unpaid internship with the music teacher helped Brian to later get a paid internship working as an assistant art teacher, working with his former art teacher. Although the experience was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic, Brian has maintained contact with the teachers and other school personnel, and together, they are exploring opportunities for Brian to go back and finish his assistant teaching internship.

## What Happened

Brian's family and teachers nurtured his interest in working in a school. Since graduating high school, Brian has applied and interviewed for several teacher assistant positions and continues to gain new skills to make sure he is as qualified as possible for the job. Brian earned a ServSafe certificate as part of his post high school career readiness training to improve his safety awareness skills. This ServSafe certification qualified him for a temporary job in a school cafeteria. Although it is not his dream job, Brian enjoys the social aspects and team activities. Commenting about this job, Brian's mom noted, *"He has definitely always wanted to stay in the school environment. I think that's why this job is really working well, because he really does like working at the school."* Brian continues to look for a job as an assistant teacher and is exploring options to pursue further training in this area, with support from his family and job coach.

## Lessons Learned

- » From a young age, Brian's family encouraged him to explore and discover his strengths and interests.
  - » Since middle school, Brian has used every opportunity to explore his interest in working in a school, while building skills at the same time.
  - » While Brian is pursuing additional training to reach his employment goal, he is working in a school environment, which offers another paid exploration opportunity to build his resume and expand his professional connections.
  - » Career exploration and work-based learning experiences were essential to defining Brian's interests and essential for him to make informed choices about his plan for employment.
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For more information about career exploration and other strategies to promote integrated employment, read [Creating a Path: How to Support Families and Young Adults with Autism to Prepare for Competitive Integrated Employment](#).

For a detailed description of the importance of competitive integrated employment and how it compares to other employment settings for people with Autism, read [Competitive Integrated Employment for People with Autism: A Toolkit for Professionals and Advocates in the Autism Community](#).

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