

Breaking the Asian Stereotype
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Written by Melissa Ung

Michael Ung is a musician, a videographer, and a soon-to-be college freshman.

Michael has lived in Reno his whole life and has only had to move twice. He moved from a lower income area to a middle-class area. Howard Ung, Michael's father, reasoning for the move was so he could make sure his children did not get mixed up in the wrong crowd that was in the previous neighborhood. "I wanted to make sure my children focused on school. I'm providing a living for them so they can achieve greater things in the future," said Howard.

Michael's oldest sister is in her third year at the University of Nevada, Reno while his other sister is still finishing up her first year at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "I plan on going to UNR too because my parents did the pre-paid tuition, I'm already in-state, and I'll be living at home to save more money," said Ung. "It's just the smartest thing to do right no. I'm saving my money for graduate school. There's nothing wrong with UNR. It's a good school."

Each Ung sibling was on a specified career track set by his or her parents. His oldest sister was supposed to be the lawyer; his other sister the dentist; and he was supposed to become a doctor. His oldest sister had started out in college as a Criminal Justice major with a specialization in Pre-Law like he is starting out, but she ended up switching to a journalism major and is pursuing news and public relations. His other sister decided to become a doctor, but she is not sure what kind of doctor yet. Michael aspires to be a lawyer or a district attorney.

Michael's parents approve the tracks that he and his second sister have chosen, but look down on the choices that the eldest had made. "She's [Melissa] isn't going to get anywhere with Journalism," said Isabel Ung, the mother of the Ung children. "She's going to end up having to go back to school or end up asking us for more money."

From elementary school to high school, Michael believes that the bell schedules made a difference in how he succeeded in school.

When Michael attended Elizabeth Lenz Elementary School, a full school day would be from 9am-3pm. This was how it would be everyday unless it was a parent-teacher conference day. "I don't remember a lot from elementary school, but I would say I did decently. I always got Satisfactory in subjects on my report card," said Michael. "It wasn't good enough for my parents, but Satisfactory meant good enough to me."

When Michael attended Edward Pine Middle School, a full school day would be from 7:30am-2pm. His 7th grade year was when Washoe County School District started early release on Wednesdays. This meant students would be let out of class 45 minutes early so middle school teachers and high school teachers could meet and talk about what needs to be taught in curriculums. This early release also gave students extra time to get ahead on homework and to do their extracurricular activities.

When Michael first started at Galena High School, the school schedule permitted six classes with the occasional 7th class if students decided to take the extra morning class. His sophomore year, the bell schedules changed in which students were required to take seven classes. This got rid of the morning class and the seventh class was just inserted into the bell schedule as a regular class.

This additional class being added to the bell schedule allowed Michael to get ahead in classes and allowed him to take extra AP classes that he wanted to take.

Michael believes that the bell schedules changing in high school should help students with graduating on time. Students are given the opportunity to get ahead and take classes, but it's all about the matters of the mind and what a person wants to motivate themselves to do. At Galena, they allow students once they are juniors to have off-campus lunches and off-campus, meaning they don't have a class at a certain point of the day. He, himself, has one off-campus, but he didn't allow himself to take them until he knew he would have completed the classes he needed to graduate.

He planned out his whole high school career his freshman year so he knew what he could do throughout the years. Things did change, but they changed to more advanced classes when he realized he was ready.

Since he did not allow himself to have an off-campus, he was taking five advanced classes for his senior year while others would be taking three or four. He had breaking points numerous times in the year but he reminds himself about graduation.

Michael was involved in numerous extracurricular activities from elementary school to high school. He was involved in martial arts, track, yearbook, student government, FBLA, and more.

Michael believed that many of his activities were a waste of time, but he learned a lot about himself and his character just from being apart of those activities. "Just being able to experience something and say I did do it is important. Not doing it and wishing I did do it is something I don't want to say to my future kids," said Michael.

"In middle school, I started rebelling and not doing what I was suppose to in my activities. I got in fights and got suspended for them," said Michael. "I look back and realize that it could have been a lot worse if I didn't learn certain values from my activities."

Michael's parents did not believe that getting involved in clubs and things like student government in middle school and high school was beneficial. They believed sports were what the children needed to do in order to succeed. The Ung children were ambivalent to this belief and didn't allow themselves to be told not to get involved. Michael and his second sister were involved in two sports, martial arts and track while their older sister joined marching band instead.

Michael and his siblings did almost all the same extracurricular activities throughout their K-12 years. Michael's parents always tried to hold him to a high standard because they believed he needed to try to be better than his sisters, but Michael believed that was not what someone's state

of mind should be. “We [siblings] only did the same activities because we have similar interests,” said Michael. “We’ve lived in the same household with each other so we’re bound to think the same in some aspects of life.”

Michael has had to take the high school proficiencies and SAT and ACTS. He dislikes them all because he believes that type of testing just tests how well people can do under stress. He himself understood what was on the tests, but his mind would go blank because of the time constraints. “I believe I’m pretty intellectual, but I just don’t do well on tests. I get too stressed out,” said Michael. “A GPA is also something that shouldn’t reflect intelligence. I don’t have a GPA because I can’t do well in tests.”

Michael said that the high school proficiency tests are now being taken away and will actually be implemented into the freshman and sophomore curriculum. Test scores from students’ junior and senior year will be determined if a student has passed proficiency. “Don’t take my word though. I don’t know the for sure facts,” said Michael.

Michael did well-enough on the SATs and ACTs that he will be receiving a \$5,000 scholarship from the university as well as the Millennium Scholarship.

Michael will a freshman in the Fall of 2016 at the University of Nevada, Reno. He will be pursuing a criminal justice major with a specialization in Pre-Law and a minor in Political Science. He will be getting involved with ASUN by interning for Legislative Affairs.

Michael’s first step is graduating on June 9th with the rest of his class.