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My music teacher has always been someone I've looked up to. He has helped me recognize my passion and act upon it in a more definite way. I've been into music my whole life: I picked up the drums when I was seven, trumpet when I was nine, and guitar when I was twelve. I began trumpet lessons in fourth grade with my current music teacher, and in those first few years of him teaching me hundreds of practice songs, I respected and liked him as a teacher, but once seventh and eighth grade rolled around, I finally began to see the impact he was having on me.

I've been playing in my own bands and writing music for four years, since my best friend and I started a band the summer after my sixth-grade year. Once I started playing guitar, I realized how much my music teacher had really taught me. And that influence only grew once I started high school and joined his contemporary music class. He introduced me to so many musicians and bands who have not only become some of my favorite things to listen to, but have ended up shaping the way I perform and write music. Artists like Chicago, Maynard Ferguson, and Rush—all introduced to me by my music instructor—have all had a huge impact on me.

But it wasn't just the songs and things he taught me that are important. The continuous support he has given me in my musical endeavors has been one of the things I am most thankful for. He has been to multiple shows I have been a part of outside of school. He always tells me what was good, but there's also always a few comments on things he noticed that he wasn't too impressed with, whether it be in my control or not. That criticism has helped drive me further into the music I perform and listen to. The way I listen to music has also changed drastically with the influence of my instructor. I hear things that, two or three years ago, I would never have picked up on. And that has made me enjoy my favorite thing more than ever.

The impact my music teacher has had on my life as a whole is something I will forever be grateful for. Having someone like him in my life has definitely helped my transition from elementary to high school. And truthfully, those kinds of people don't get enough credit, especially where we live. There is such a negative portrayal of the North Country in the news. Everyone around us sees it as a poor, drug-addled area with nothing to offer. But some of the people around here recognize that stigma and get past it to do something positive in a place that most people have deemed hopeless.