

Adam Henze, M.A.T. B.A. English Writing, 2006

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“Think pragmatically about what doors your [English] degree can open for you. My degree was helpful because I became a teacher—I wonder what other doors would have opened had I not chosen that path.”



Adam Henze graduated from Western Kentucky University in 2006 with bachelor’s degrees in English Writing and Communications Studies. In 2012, Henze earned a Master of Arts in Teaching, concentrating in English and Speech, from the University of Indianapolis. Currently, Henze is a Research Associate at the [Indiana Institute on Disability and Community](#). He is also a PhD candidate at Indiana University, with an anticipated graduation in 2020, and he gives educational workshops as a Professional Performance Poet. Henze has been honored as [Official Poet of the 100th Running of the Indianapolis 500](#), recipient of the [Harste Alternative Literacies Fellowship](#), and [Kentucky Colonel](#) for Service in Youth Education.

Henze was active in speech and debate during high school. He chose to attend WKU to join the Forensics team, for which the university offered him a full scholarship.

“Writing was more of my truer passion,” said Henze. “I was really excited about English Writing, and I thought that coupling it with a Communications Studies degree would be a marketable, smart thing of me to do.”

Henze believes that his English classes prepared him well for his graduate career, and his English department professors encouraged his love of writing. “English and literacy are my life,” said Henze. Dr. Tom Hunley and the late Professor Mary Ellen Miller mentored Henze during his undergraduate career. “I liked them because they didn’t pull any punches when critiquing my writing,” said Henze. While at WKU, Henze also helped host events such as poetry slams, open mics, and showcases on campus.

Before graduating from WKU, Henze had no intention of teaching or returning to school. His involvement with debate and teaching performances changed his mind. "In 2007, I was invited to perform poetry for a classroom in Indiana, and it turned out that I really liked it!" said Henze. "We had a workshop for kids to write about what they loved, like X-box, tractor pulls, all their different loves in poetry. I slept like a baby that night." Henze decided to return to school and earn a master's degree in teaching, which he completed in 2012. Since 2005, Henze has actively taught writing and communications through educational workshops in grade schools, colleges, prisons, libraries, and community centers across the US and UK.

At the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Henze designs professional development curricula for schools across Indiana. "My family has been a part of disability advocacy since World War II," said Henze. "Working with teachers around the state to have more inclusive [learning] content and remove barriers in the classroom so that all students can learn is very full circle, and it's something that makes me smile." Henze also coordinates prison literacy programs across Indiana for the IIDC.

In his free time, Henze loves traveling, watching films, and attending hip-hop and heavy metal concerts. "If there's anything nerdy and literacy-related, I like it," said Henze. He also loves playing video games, which are one of his primary research interests at Indiana University.

Henze recommends that students research what doors they can open with their English degree after graduation. "[As a student] I didn't get it in terms of 'This English Writing degree helps me access spaces,'" said Henze. "[After graduation] I thought about how I can use [my degree] in a way that will build up a revenue stream, that will build up some sustainability, that will build up a network of other professionals who support me, who critique my work, who provide me other opportunities." Henze built a foundation for his career in this way, and he hopes to continue his research and advocacy for years to come.

