

**"Punctuated Equilibrium"**  
By: A Young Adult Aspire Intern  
November 2013



*The following letter was written by a young adult who participated in our summer Career Development Program to his job coach. It was presented at the New England Museum Association Conference in November of this year by his job coach, Beth O'Brien, and Carol Carlson, Director of Volunteers at the Harvard Museum of Natural History, along with Dot Lucci, Program Director of Aspire. The presentation was titled: **Valuing Diversity in a Volunteer/Guide Program.***

Matt (pseudonym), Aspire intern learned many different skills as a participant in our program and wanted to continue as a volunteer at the museum after the program ended. Matt also recognized that he benefitted from having a job coach who taught him the "hidden curriculum" and wanted this relationship to continue. His parents hired Beth to work privately with him and to this day he continues to volunteer at the museum! His exact letter is below and it was the highlight of our presentation! Read on to "hear his words" and be touched by his growth and insight.

Dear Beth,

These past few weeks have been great for me. I've really progressed as a person thanks to your help. I've become more friendly, more sociable, and make much better eye contact. I've even started thinking of how I look to others when I'm in conversations, all thanks to you. Your advice has been great for me because you showed me where my weak areas were and how to improve them without seeming like you were looking down on me.

Not only have I improved these traits but I've gotten a chance to practice them at the both the museum and Aspire. They both give me different challenges. The museum allows me to interact with wide variety of people, while Aspire helps me with making friends and having conversations. As a result of the great experience I've had with you, Tom, and Bob (other interns - pseudonyms) at the museum, I've already changed my courses for next semester to biology ones. In biology there's an important term called "punctuated equilibrium", which is when species stay the same for a very long time before quickly evolving into a new species. I feel that you've done the same for me, by letting me become a better person far faster and more effectively than I could have on my own. I'll always remember how you helped me.

Thanks for everything,  
Matt