MIT Autobiographical Essay (Reflection Paper Guide)

The Autobiographical Essay is an exercise in self-reflection. The intent of this process is for us to get to know you and your background better, giving our team a better ability to consider the ‘professional fit’ of each candidate. Thus, we want to know about your personal strengths, your knowledge in content areas, your experience in teaching, your ability to serve as a role model for youth, etc. To help facilitate this process, we have outlined seven sections for your essay below; complete with prompts to help you respond to each area. Your essay should be 4-6 pages in length (double-spaced 11 pt. font) and will address all seven areas. Regarding format, please begin the paper with a brief introduction and close with a brief conclusion; the body should be divided into the subheadings listed below. We will evaluate your essay for content, as well as writing conventions. This is an important piece as we evaluate your fit for the program and the profession.

In your essay please address the following:

1. **Intellectual/Academic Experience:** What are my intellectual strengths? How/when do I use critical thinking skills? What are my problem solving strategies? How fluent am I in transferring ideas from one context to another? What are the strengths of my academic background? What are my academic weaknesses?

2. **Cultural Awareness:** Where do I stand on issues of diversity? Have I experienced or seen the effects of bias or prejudice as it relates to any area of diversity? What is my acquaintance with the various socio-economic groups of people in the U.S./World? What experiences have enhanced my outlook?

3. **Interpersonal Skills:** How well do I get along with my peers? With those younger? With those older? How do I handle criticism? What is my level of social maturity? How would I describe my personality?

4. **Moral and Spiritual Character:** How do I demonstrate my personal code of ethics? How do I live out my beliefs? Where do I stand on issues of personal integrity and honesty? What character deficiencies am I addressing? What is my level of commitment to serving others?

5. **Professional Dispositions:** How would I describe my level of mental/emotional stability? How do I react under emotional stress? What is my ability to handle emergencies? Do I understand contextual conventions about professional dress and interaction? Am I physically able to maintain a heavy work load in teaching?

6. **Teaching Experiences:** What formal or informal teaching experiences have I had? In brief, describe each experience in terms of group/individual, age of learner(s), setting, length of time, level of teaching responsibilities, etc. What did I learn from each experience?

7. **Teaching Desire:** Why do I want to be a teacher? What is it about the teaching profession that attracts me? What do I look forward to the most when I think about being a teacher?