

Endurance is Key

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By Amanda Dean

Running takes trial and tribulation, but once endurance is gained, there is no giving in. Over the course of these past two years in the MAED program, I have grown as a learner, a teacher, and a colleague. I have broadened my "literacy library" and utilized new styles of teaching that I had never thought probable. I have had an eye opening experience on the importance of diversifying instruction, creating new types of assessments, and connecting key themes across various genres. Building upon student inquiry has been one style that I continue to use, as well as differentiating lessons and tasks (level of difficulty) to fit every learner type. Utilizing technology is a source of education that is extremely evident, and I have learned it is necessary when reaching today's learners; we must meet them in the middle when it comes to technology no matter what subject is being taught. Even though I am one of the last Physical Education majors in the Department of Kinesiology to finish at Michigan State University, my road will not end with the termination of this once offered degree. Endurance is the key. Some of my future goals - besides forever incorporating cross curricular learning into my own classes - is to advocate for the re-approval of the PETE Major back at Michigan State University.

The knowledge I have acquired since starting my Master of Arts in Education at Michigan State is insurmountable. I am excited to pursue new unit plans and lessons associated with anatomical structure revolving around literacy education. I have utilized everyday "quick reads" on the gym's white board to help students read the lesson of the day. I have also incorporated the use of technology with video feedback of movement patterns and peer response.

Involving students in new topics such as "bones and muscles of the day" is another feature I have included in all of my lessons. I am excited to continue adapting lessons to meet the needs of my learners, and hopefully next year teach upper elementary grades the importance of anatomical awareness. There have been specific courses throughout the MAED program that have helped me reach my goals and desires within the literacy education concentration.

Students mature and develop at various paces. Knowing this, teachers must adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students. In TE 846- Accommodating Differences in Literacy Learners, instructed by Erin Jurand, I was able to work on reading comprehension (one on one) with a student with autism. I learned that there are many different forms of assessments that can bring students to similar outcomes throughout their learning pathways. Some students are better test takers, others better writers, while some would rather perform a skit or show demonstrating their knowledge of material learned. Either way, the ending points are clear through the path of learning they overcome. With this particular case study, I first established a strong connection with the student in the pool. He was a swimmer and just about to join his high school team, but needed a little more conditioning first. After working with him in the pool and making a positive friendly connection, I asked if I could work with him on some literacy skills. We decided to practice short stories and summarization skills. Instead of writing down answers to specific main events throughout the stories we read, he drew beautiful illustrations of the scenes that unraveled throughout the book, almost like a comic strip. This learner had great receptive language but lacked expressive language. Instead of forcing this student to take a test/verbalize his thoughts, artwork proved to be a lifeline that helped him illustrate his knowledge and his reading comprehension. I worked with him all summer on being able to

develop his summarization skills through picture stories, which helped him internalize the photos and succeed on the actual written tests that came in the fall when the school year started. Being able to adapt lessons & assessments to fit various learner types is important for successful experiences. TE 846 helped me understand that students do not always learn the same way, that is why differentiated instruction is so important.

Furthermore, the MAED program has helped me understand the importance of diversified learning; which is my overall outlook on education. One of the elective courses I chose to take was KIN 856- Physical Bases of Coaching Athletes, instructed by George Harnick. After having George throughout my student teaching curriculum, I knew this would be no walk in the park; yet a meaningful and insightful course on engaging with athletes and maintaining strong conditioning plans. Knowing how the body reacts to various types of activities (like those in endurance training, power, flexibility instances) helps coaches better develop the best practices for routines throughout a season. Knowing proper nutrition is not only important for athletes, but also for their healthy lifestyles outside of the season. I had many flashbacks to KIN 217- Applied Human Anatomy Lab - throughout this course, since the format of the class was intense on identifying specific muscles of the body (biceps brachii, trapezius, muscles of the scapulae, extensors, flexors, muscles of the quadriceps, etc). This course not only helped me reflect on my Kinesiology background, but also incorporated the importance of literacy and proper writing techniques in assignments like the "Muscle Roles & Identification Report" and the "Parent Communication Letter" about sport preparatory/recovery nutrition information. Keeping up with parent communication is vital to the overall sport environment; therefore writing with proper

spelling, pronunciation, and overall grammar is essential in keeping positive and professional contact with coaching staff, athletes, and parents.

In addition to diversifying instruction and learning across curriculum, I have also grasped the importance of learning with technology. Students in the 21st century learn through technology via the internet, iPad/iPhone applications, new and improved sites and sources, and social media. There is no way to avoid the vast and ever changing sources of technology and their uses. Teachers must meet students in the middle when it comes to learning with this technological "aid." In the course TE 831- Teaching School Subject Matter with Technology, led by Dr. Jeff Bale, we discussed and learned about an insurmountable array of online resources that can help students organize thoughts, send peer-to-peer feedback, post papers, and store research information all with the touch of a button. Although technology has become a driving force in education, there still is no replacement for the face to face contact with teacher/student interactions. I believe wholeheartedly that technology must be used as a supplement to teaching, never as a replacement. In TE 831, the online Wiki page that was utilized will always be in my library of favorite pages since there was such a wealth of information shared by colleagues in the course. We learned how to produce digital stories and voice overs on voice thread, and proposed a re-purposed lesson plan that showcased work with technology. During this assignment, I was able to have students observe their own overhand throwing techniques after playing back a recording on Coach's Eye through my iPad/Apple TV mirroring feature. I was then able to group students together with a rubric to check each others forms. Their excitement soared through the roof when they were able to see themselves motions playback on the screen. This was a huge motivational factor and helped some students push

themselves to work harder knowing they could see themselves in action. This also helped with student's honesty and fairness throughout the game since they knew it would be played back.

Almost all took their outs fairly and respectfully. Being able to playback the Scatter-ball game in motion picture allowed for a sense of community and excitement in every class which I tested. Technological tools such as this can also aid in slow motion breakdown. I was able to slow the motion down and use drawing tools such as circles, arrows, and lines to pinpoint proper angles in overhand throwing motion.

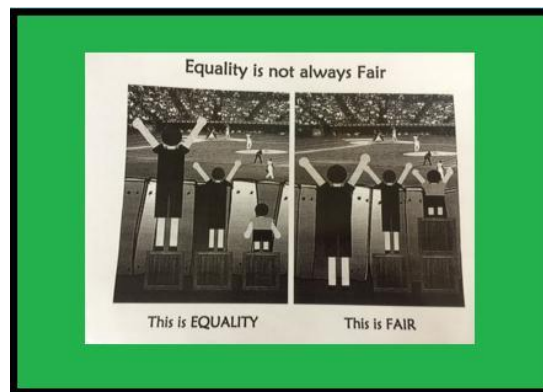
Finally, one of the most in depth courses that helped me connect ideas from genre to genre was TE 849- Methods and Materials for Teaching Children's & Adolescent Literature, taught by Kristin McIlhagga. This course helped me not only view a vast array of genres from children's picture books to adult fiction novels, but also helped every student take on the view of how each text works in a personal, textual, critical, and pedagogical lens. This helped myself and classmates spark group conversations on numerous topics such as; how personal references in the stories relate to one another, how textual responses can embark structure and poetic verses, how to critically analyze another perspective of the knowledge being gained, and how teachers could utilize each of the works in a pedagogical context. Peer groups discussed an array of diverse books including *One Crazy Summer*, by Rita Williams Garcia, *Out of My Mind*, by Sharon Draper, *I Want my Hat Back*, by Jon Klassen, and *Art and Max*, by David Wiesner. Never did I realize how important pictures give meaning to text as well as the choice of the artists medium. Besides critically analyzing and having group discussions on all of the main themes from the books listed above, we were also required to collect and study fifteen picture books and five novels in our final Independent Reading Project. This project was

designed to help us connect meaning throughout all the books that were selected. Specific similarities were connected through genres like race & culture, animal selections, poetry selections, fantasy & realism, domesticity & adventure, as well as history, science and life writing. Never did I realize the connections that could be made across contents, subjects, and genres. The final synthesis project helped me especially connect ideas from a large array of sources, kind of like how this course is designed to help us make connections from various themes across all of the MAED course contents we have studied thus far.

The insights that I have gained and learned as a student through the MAED program has directly been impacting my students in the classroom. I continue to force their own thinking on diverse curriculum and the importance of being well rounded individuals. Just because one is a master at long division does not make a student academically sound in all areas. The sciences, the arts, mathematics, history and literature are all areas of study that one must review throughout K-12 schooling. One of my key goals is to help keep children's bodies healthy and well nourished during all of their learning hours. This comes with the realization that there must be an awareness of the benefits associated with healthy lifestyles, (getting sixty minutes of play per day, while learning cross curricular materials). Literacy, especially, is one of my strong suits that I try to utilize in the gymnasium by posting lessons on the white board for all to read, a topic of the day,(incorporating a bone or muscle identification) and utilizing technology. I just hope my colleagues are doing all that they can to give students a "brain gym" type break in the classroom during their at times rigorous curriculum that they must teach.

Lastly, I leave with the notion that life and learning is not always fair, and that we learn

from our failures. I have learned that critical feedback is essential when reflecting on one's own teaching practices. As endurance is key when running, so is planning when teaching. When teachers go that extra step to plan ahead and endure their everyday tackles, that is when student success is greatly achieved. Many of my students think that everything must be fair all of the time, that they need of the same amount of equipment and challenges as everyone else. However life is not always fair.



Fair isn't everybody getting the same thing; Fair is getting everybody what they need in order to be successful.

I had the privilege to be one of the last finishing Physical Education majors at Michigan State University; one to have the privilege to learn the vital skills necessary to turn around and teach children the importance of healthy, well rounded lifestyles. While I am happy that my Masters journey has come to an end, and though I have learned a wealth of knowledge through its courses, I still think it is not fair that other students at MSU will not have the chance to complete such an amazing curriculum that I was able to endure. I wish I could do something to help college students like me looking for a rewarding career in Physical Education find that path. My conditioning has just begun to try to get this curriculum back on track at MSU. I will endure as much as possible to help future students who want to pursue Physical Education at Michigan State University make it a probable reality. However, no matter the journey, the trial or tribulations, the successes or the failures that make us learn, endurance is key.