

Smiling Back on the Past

When I began my Master's of Arts in Education (MAED) program at Michigan State University, I was getting my feet wet in many different parts of my life. I was a newlywed of about one year, I was teaching in my second year within an inner-city school and I embarked on a journey to attain a master's degree in education. When getting your feet wet, it is a scary and even fun adventure that will enable you to head down a path that you set. Just like anything in life, you need to get your feet wet in order to understand the goals that need to be set, in order to achieve success. At this moment, I was getting my feet wet in obtaining a Master's Degree from Michigan State University, so I can improve my skills as a teacher to help educate my students. Just before dipping my toe in the water, a few questions came about. What obstacles await you in the water? What new, exciting things might you find in the water? What enjoyments may you receive because you went into the water?

The obstacles that immediately jumped out were how I could apply what I do in my graduate work, to my professional life as a teacher. Right away, I had a goal. I needed to find the purpose in every class, that I could easily apply to teaching. When I looked around the world of education, technology seemed to pop up at every corner. I knew that I wanted to use my time in many of my classes to explore the ways that technology could change my teaching, or even how students learn. Another obstacle that I found in the water, were classes that I was "forced" to take. For example, TE846, better known as Accommodating Differences in Literacy Learners. I didn't want this class because I was a social studies teacher and not a language arts teacher. Even with these thoughts, the class added another set of uses that I could apply to my classroom. On a side note, I now tell my classes on the first day of the school year to not think of this as a history class. Instead think of this as a second language arts class with history being the topic.

As I fast forward through the years, my goals still remain very similar. I am driven to bring proven methods of learning, to help each student achieve. As I look at the various teaching methods that I use throughout the school year, I see strategies that I developed within the MAED program, used quite often. An exciting part of the class is revisiting many of the works completed earlier in graduate school. I often will learn a new teaching method, get very excited to use the method and then bury it deep in my memory never to be revisited. Looking back on these buried memories, I'm certain that I have many teaching methods that I have learned about, that will come back to the surface. This time around, I will make sure to use these teaching techniques to improve my teaching ability and my students capacity to learn.

Looking back, all I can do is smile, knowing that I took the opportunity to get my feet wet!