

Realizing the Big Ideas of Teaching Early On

Many of the teaching skills courses I have taken discussed the concept of teaching “big ideas”, or the major concepts we want our students to understand. Looking back at the goal statement I wrote as part of my application to the MAED program in May 2009, I realize that my major goals, or the “big ideas”, as a teacher and learner have not changed much. This tells me that MSU’s College of Education laid a solid foundation for me since my goals reflect many of the integral concepts I learned about throughout my undergraduate study and internship. The MAED program has built upon this foundation so that I have been able to apply what I have learned to my teaching.

Although I have not completely accomplished all of my goals yet, I believe that I am well on my way. The first goal I stated was that I desired “to become a master teacher by engaging my students academically, developing relationships with them, and meeting their individual needs.” I still strongly believe that these are the three most important elements of teaching. I am constantly looking for creative ways to engage students in writing, vocabulary, and grammar.

Next, developing relationships with students can be one of the most enjoyable aspects of teaching. I recently received a comment from a student on an evaluation that stated it was helpful, “when you worked with us one-on-one for our poems because it made us feel like you care.”

The third part of this goal pinpointed meeting individual students’ needs. This is one of the most challenging yet rewarding parts of teaching. It is fairly easy to pick out students who struggle, but it is helping them overcome those struggles that can be so difficult. The courses I took during my internship year and the literacy course required for Michigan teachers that focuses on making accommodations for literacy learners all emphasized how imperative it is to differentiate teaching to meet students’ needs. I don’t think I would have been as acutely aware

of what my struggling students' particular needs were this year, or how to work with them, had I not taken these courses.

My second goal stated that, because I minored in English and history during my undergraduate studies, I wanted to "learn more about teaching math and science." At the time, I figured I would gain employment as an elementary teacher and be teaching every subject. Since then, I have completed my first year as a full-time teacher teaching middle school English. However, the courses I took that have fulfilled the math and science requirements, especially one on using technology in the classroom, have allowed me to integrate these subjects into my writing lessons.

Integration leads to my third stated goal: "I also plan on continuing my education through reading teaching and best-practice literature, going to conferences, and collaborating with other teachers so that I can learn how to improve my teaching techniques and meet all students' needs." Just the other day, the science teacher and I were discussing some collaborative and integrative ideas for next year, and we are hoping to get the other teachers on board as well.

Lastly, in order to keep up with best practices, I've maintained membership with Kappa Delta Pi, an international honor society for teachers, and enjoy reading its quarterly magazine for classroom ideas and various viewpoints on educational issues. I also traveled to the International Reading Association Conference this year and gained many new ideas from other teachers and products.

The "big ideas" about teaching I developed over three years ago have remained constant in my career so far. As I continue growing into a master teacher, I know that I will continue using the big ideas that the College of Education and the MAED program have helped me develop and apply so that my students can benefit as much as possible.