

Future as a Learner Essay

The Eye Roll That Got Me Thinking...

By: Mallory Opiela

Recently while sitting in the teacher's lounge at my school, we started talking about master's degrees. Some teachers already had them, some hadn't started yet, and some were working towards them. For the teachers that were working towards their degrees, the next question of course was from where. Many of my colleagues stated they earned their degrees or are currently working towards them at local universities and colleges, except for me. When I said I was receiving mine through Michigan State University online, I got some interesting responses. Some teachers looked perplexed, some were intrigued by the idea, and I even had one teacher roll his/her eyes. This eye roll then sparked my interest. Why did my learning online deserve an eye roll? Is my degree worth a little less, because I earned it online? Were the others better than me? It got me thinking.

This response shocked me a little because here I have been immersed in this online culture for three years and it has opened my eyes to a whole other world of learning. I have met so many people from various states and countries and I have been led by some of the best professors in their field. Obviously, the person that rolled their eyes has no idea how online learning has revolutionized the educational world and how it makes education accessible to almost everyone. It also provides a unique and engaging environment, and an opportunity to become a lifelong learner, which should be important, especially for teachers. As teachers we must be lifelong learners to educate ourselves in the latest and greatest techniques so we are current in the ever changing field

of education. The concept of being a lifelong learner has been emphasized through each and every one of my courses, in the Masters of Arts of Education (MAED) program and it has helped me develop a plan to continue my education upon my graduation.

One way I am going to continue my professional learning is to use the internet as a platform for my continuing education. Whether it is watching free webinars about developing self-esteem in students that I found in EAD 824, Leading Teacher Learning, or watching the ever inspiring TED conference seminars that I learned about from ED 800, Concepts of Educational Inquiry. The internet has provided me with information that I would not have been able to find or gather on my own.

My classes have made me aware of all of the various online resources, to help teachers learn more about their profession and their students. The internet and the online learning format of my classes have engaged and sparked my interest, more than the traditional lecture style of learning could. It has inspired me to bring more technology into my classroom as well. I am currently trying to weave in an online answer and question forum into my high school PE class and I am currently developing an informative athletics website for my athletes and parents. While being in the MAED program, I have been exposed to websites and resources that have made a huge impact on me and my learning, and have inspired me to continue to build upon them throughout my life.

Another way I am going to continue as a lifelong learner is to keep in touch with my professors and classmates to continue to build my professional network. Throughout my time here in the MAED program, I have built some great relationships with my professors and classmates that have really helped my learning. For example, for KIN

856, we needed to develop a professional network that involved professionals from the sport science field. I had to include doctors, nutritionists, exercise physiologists, sport therapists, and athletic trainers. I had no idea where to start, but with the help of my professor, Scott Riewald and my classmates, I got in touch with a nutritionist, that led me to a sport therapist, and so on. With the help of my online community for that class, I was able to get in contact with and support from the some of the greatest minds in sports science. Sustaining and maintaining my relationships that I have built over the years in the MAED program will continue to help my lifelong learning because they will provide me with resources to answer questions or possibly new career paths.

Finally as a lifelong learner I need to continue to share what I have learned in the MAED program with my colleagues and other professionals. During my time in the MAED program, I have developed a mission statement for our athletics program, a year-long coaches learning program about leadership, a self-esteem program for our high school girls, and an anti-hazing policy for our athletes. I have shared all of my work with my colleagues and principal and I have been able to implement them directly into our current program. Sharing my work with my colleagues has put me into a position of leadership and has helped my colleagues with their lifelong learning.

I knew that when I became a teacher, I signed up for learning throughout my career, but going through the program really made me realize the importance of it. Education is an ever changing field that always has a new technique, a new piece of technology, or a new strategy for one to try. As a teacher it is my responsibility to be informed about these new techniques so I can make a positive impact on my learning community and myself.