

What Comes Next

As my journey through the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program nears an end, I am left wondering, what comes next? Even before I entered my final semester, my greatest supporters often presented me with questions that I did not have concrete answers for at the time. "What are you going to do next now that you have your Master's degree?" "Are you going to look for a teaching job?" "Are you going to continue coaching?" "YOU'RE NOT LEAVING US ARE YOU?" Imagine this question being shouted to me by a 10 year old gymnast. Each question leading me to think about where I am now, where I could go, and where I actually see myself going. There is one question that I do know the answer to, "Do you want to be a teacher?" My answer is simple, I TEACH every day.

When I decided to commit to becoming a "life-long learner" in 2009 with my Bachelor's degree, I knew I would pursue a higher form of education at some point in my "future" career. My teaching internship paved a path towards the completion of my Master's degree at Michigan State University. As I entered the program I had a few goals in mind, be a student of my craft, expand on my current teaching practices in order to reach all of my students and my ultimate goal of becoming a classroom or resource room teacher. My non traditional classroom presents many opportunities to challenge not only my teaching abilities, but my potential as a coach. After my first semester in the MAED program, I began to focus my goals around expanding my knowledge and skills for the benefit of the students I currently work with, as well as the students that I will work with in the future. My special education concentration opened my eyes to new techniques, ideas and methods for reaching and teaching each student in a way that is best for the child. The skills I have acquired throughout my Master's courses apply to not only my ability to *teach* all of my students, additionally they have aided in my coaching expertise. From my special education courses to my elective courses, I have learned how to maximize my gymnast's potential as a student, learner and athlete.

Another question that was asked by one of my gymnast's parents was, "Did you learn anything new that pertains to your current *teaching* situation?" I learned that many athletes do not understand the premise of a sport until they reach adolescence, and at that point, the idea can still be unclear to many children. I learned that there are literally one hundred ways to teach a skill and each gymnast will learn that skill in one of those one hundred ways, everyone learns differently. All children can learn and will learn; teamwork and determination makes anything possible.

Lastly, there is one more question that remains, "Did I achieved all of the goals I set for myself at the beginning of this program?" That answer is still a work in progress. Currently, I have completed my task of becoming a student of my craft, as I am still gaining more valuable knowledge to grow into a more well rounded educator. I have filled my "teaching toolbox" with more methods for reaching all of my students. However, at this point in time, my love for teaching and coaching has made it possible for me to work with children and teach a sport that I enjoy, so my search for a classroom teaching position is more of an idea for the future than an ultimate goal.