

Another Degree is almost in the books? What am I going to do in all of my free time?

My future as a life-long learner:

As another formal education chapter draws to a close I cannot help but wonder, “What have I really learned and how will I use this knowledge?” When I first embarked on this journey, my short term goal was to satisfy the criteria my undergraduate students may have had, “What qualifies *her* to teach us, anything?” I was very concerned that my students would somehow feel that my not yet having an advanced degree would somehow put them at a disadvantage. I wanted to be the absolute best teacher I could be to my students and I knew that at MAED would help get me there.

As I near completion of this degree I can honestly say that I have met not only my short-term goal but I have also met many of the long-term goals I had set for myself. I have always been passionate about education and although my route into the formal education classroom was not the most traditional one, I am here and I have loved every moment of it. Throughout this journey I have learned what it means to be a “life-long” learner and more specifically the needs that adult-learners have in their quest to attain their undergraduate degrees.

Learning does not end when you hit “submit” on that final assignment. Learning does not end when you walk across the stage at commencement, it does not end when you “update” the last page of your website. It is only the beginning. As I am writing this, I am looking forward to a time where I can actually process all that I have learned. When I can put into action all of the literature I have read and written about and how it will impact me as an educator of future educators. During my time in my program I have been able to adjust techniques along the way, for example, introducing my students to “active reading” and what “reading the chapter” actually means.

As far as my short term goals professionally, I would like to start teaching different courses in our Mathematics Elementary Education program. As a result of attaining this degree I now qualify to instruct and guide a group of student teachers. I would love to see our students interacting and teaching children. I would love to see how much their courses they “take with them” into the field. I would love to see how much of the things I have learned on my journey directly impact the way in which I interact with my students.

Personally, I am looking forward to having some time to rediscover myself. For so long I have been a student in a formal setting, that I am looking forward to encountering the “new me.” I am looking forward to learning how to knit, read a book for pleasure, having dinner on the table for my family (or at least a plan), emptying out

junk drawers and all of the things I used to take for granted before formal education took me over. I am looking forward to volunteering on my children's field trips, taking walks with them and slowing down from this 90 mile per hour pace that I have been on for the last several years.

I will also be taking some time to really decide what it is that I want to do professionally. Do I want to embark on the PhD level to attain a professorship or is teaching as an adjunct just fine? Do I want to continue to pursue Mathematics as a Teacher Educator of Mathematics or do I switch to Language Arts, I love them both equally or can I do both? Can I teach at the Elementary level again and teach a course in the evening at the university? These are just the few of the questions that I will be pondering over the next year, so that I may continue to grow and learn.

The beauty of being a life-long learner is that the journey never ends. I may encounter road blocks, challenges and frustrations but as long as I learn from each experience they will only serve to enhance who I have become and who I will continue to become. Education does not only come from being formally trained, but by enhancing and sharing what you have learned with those around you. Equally sharing in the experiences of those around us, we learn from them, by being open to our surroundings we are able to enhance our knowledge. I look forward to continuing my growth not only as an educator, but also as a parent and a wife.

-Mixsy L. Trinidad

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