A Trip Down Memory Lane and the Road Ahead
Alicia Belant

When I think about what I have learned over the past year and a half, I almost feel overwhelmed! Upon entering MSU's MAED program, I knew next to nothing about education. Now, after having taken a trip down memory lane, I have realized just how much I have gained. I feel my educational experience has been a well-rounded one, thus I find it difficult to select only a few classes that highlight this experience. While I have learned valuable information through each class I have taken, the classes I have elected to discuss below I have found to be most immediately applicable in both my personal and professional life.

Memory Lane

My trip down memory lane starts with being enrolled in the technology section of CEP 800, Psychology of Learning in School and Other Settings where I was exposed to a variety of psychological principles regarding how technology effects the way people learn in a variety of settings. What influence does technology have? Does the type of technology have a specific effect? One of the many concepts I learned was regarding how an object or technological advancement looks visually and how that effects our perspective on how well it works. The more visually appealing an object is to the learner, the better they will anticipate it works. Does this way of thinking, consciously or not, affect how much the learner is able to absorb? It actually does! While it is no secret that people learn in a variety of ways through many mediums, does the mode of information delivery make a difference? Of course it does! Take reading for example. Surfing the web has become such commonplace in our society. Read a short blurb and on to the next article. Does this type of repetitive, quick reading predispose those web surfers to quickly read a more in depth article from a research journal and not fully absorb the information? Some research says yes, others no. However, understanding the potential impact should have an effect on how I teach and what I expect of my future students. Taking these concepts (visual appeal, delivery method), I developed lesson plans which include both podcasts and videos to show I am capable of delivering information in a variety of ways to accommodate various types of learners. Having had to do so, I became familiar with the various technologies that are available to me and how to best utilize them to enhance learning. I fully intend to use what is available to me in the future to enhance learning. My students will most likely be learning in a variety of environment including the classroom and clinical and on-field rotations. Being able to utilize what is available in each environment will, hopefully, aid in student learning and information retention.

CEP 818, Creativity in Teaching and Learning offered a real insight into what it means to be creative and how this can be used to both teach and learn. Several questions were asked regarding creativity including: what does

it mean to be creative? Is creativity born or can it be developed/ learned/ nurtured? What does the creative process look like? What is the relationship among creativity, play and humor? Through answering such questions, it became clear that creativity is of increasing importance to educators both for their professional success and that of their students. This course also had a focus on technology which emphasized how technology can help us become more creative teachers and learners. I was able to identify with various aspects of creativity and integrate technology in meaningful ways to convey various concepts in musculoskeletal rehabilitation. Through understanding creativity and integrating it with technology and effective teaching, students can have open opportunities to be both creative and successful and not one or the other. I feel I am better able to identify creativity within myself and others and recognize this as an attribute rather than merely a difference in interpretation of information.

I find both CEP 800 and CEP 818 have a very close relationship with each other. If you understand various aspects of creativity, it makes understanding the psychology of learning much easier and vice-versa. I think having elected to take these two classes has complimented my educational experience quite nicely. Together, they have enabled me to engage more deeply with technology through an educational context and use technology as a learning tool, not to use it simply because it exists.

EAD 866, Teaching in Post-Secondary Education is a rather important highlight in my graduate educational career. Several conceptions of education and teaching were explored along with learning environments and the learning process and how the process correlates with the environment and the educator. I felt this class helped me "connect the dots" from all my other classes. I affectionately added the tag line to this class, "method to the madness" because I learned how other educators distribute information and the purposes behind the methods they utilize. What makes an educator a *good* educator? Just as importantly, what is the definition of good? Is it measured by how well learners are able to recite information or is it how they apply said information? As a future educator, I will need to evaluate myself and really assess what my students are learning and if and how they are using the information being discussed in class or in other settings. Through this course I learned that learner characteristics should influence teaching strategies and teaching can be improved through accurate assessment of the educator and further development of that educator.

EAD 877, Program Planning and Evaluation in the Post-Secondary Context is the final stop on memory lane. Here, I learned to take a careful look at all aspects of the planning and evaluative processes. There are many facets to consider in each process and a thorough examination of each is necessary when considering a program in its entirety. I was able to utilize information learned here to develop my own program at my current job and also analyze the implementation of a future educational program at my job. Had I not taken this class, I do not believe I would have been able to ask the appropriate questions that needed to be asked nor make decisions that

were backed by educational concepts. In the future I intend to maintain a keen perspective on the circumstances and facets that surround the planning and implementation of a program as well as the evaluation of that program.

The Road Ahead

Simply because my educational experience in MSU's MAED program is nearing the end of the road does not mean I am stopping there. Looking forward to the road ahead, I plan to fully utilize the tools and knowledge I have acquired to become the best educator and mentor I can be for my students. I want to the learner at the heart of education and in doing so, turn out not only informed students but better, more rounded individuals. I do not want learning to be merely regurgitating information without being able to apply it in appropriate situations. Taking into consideration all I have learned regarding the psychology behind learning, creativity, utilizing technology effectively, knowing what is even considered to be "effective", and being able to appropriately plan and evaluate my program(s) seems like such a daunting task when it comes to actually applying all this information in a real-life context. However, already having had to give lectures and presentations, make lesson plans, create videos and podcasts and plan entire programs makes this large task less daunting. In the future, I will forever be "connecting the dots" from my education classes and understanding and perfecting my own "method to the madness" as I educate future students.