Lessons in life are always learned in a variety of ways. From personal experiences to lessons inside a classroom, people all learn valuable insights that help them live and lead more positive, more successful lives. A few lessons that all people need to learn and give light towards are ones having to do with being able to cope within society. Because of the fact that our society is ever-changing, people have to learn to identify, to understand and to accept diversity. By attending the Celebrating Diversity workshop at Manchester College, I believe that I gained valuable insight into diversity, learned how to understand different types of diversity and also learned how to help myself and others fully accept all people, in all situations.

Diversity is something that Manchester College prides itself on, and I love the idea of living on such a diverse campus. I believe it has opened my eyes to many more different types of people that are in this world. The diversity workshop helped me learn more about what diversity really is. It is based upon identity groups that people belong to. In the past, when I used to hear ‘diverse’ I would only think of things such as race and culture. Identity groups are all the people who are included in different groups that can be defined by gender, race, heritage, family roles, religion, sexual orientation and many more. Hidden identity roles or even identity roles that you don’t often to think about are the ones that were brought to my attention. I did not know that because I am an aunt or a daughter, those things put me into ‘identity groups.’ It makes sense, it was just not something I had previously thought about.

A key quote that I am taking away from the workshop is, “The problem for us in not only to learn, but also to unlearn,” previously quoted from Gloria Steinem. It is easy for people to learn new information, gain new insight and accept realities as they are faced with them.
However, this is not often the case with prejudicial or racist problems. The problem is the recordings that are set into our minds from the beginning of our lives. Little things that we don’t notice are constantly comparing different types of people, such as races. Examples such as ‘angel’ food cake is white and ‘devil’s’ food cake is black or that black is the ‘absence’ of color and white is ‘all’ colors together, show us little samples of predetermined recordings. These small, simple recordings become symbols in our minds, subconsciously putting non-positive thoughts into our minds.

From these recordings, I also gained insight into the fact that we can learn correct information that overrides our recordings. To be able to learn new information we must identify the misleading knowledge that is already sorted in our minds about certain groups. A good way to identify this incorrect information is to provide ourselves positive outlets that let us think about diversity, such as workshops. Beyond workshops, a good way to help fix wrong recordings is to continually surround ourselves with diverse groups of people.

Most stereotypes that we hold in our minds are about certain groups of people that we may not have ever met or that we have met just a few people from. A person might think that all people who live in Kentucky are ‘hicks’ because they have met one person from Kentucky who always talks about country life and has a weird accent. Therefore, a good way to overcome this stereotype is to meet a plethora of people from Kentucky, by this process it is easier to see that not all people from Kentucky are the same. This goes for any group, not all people inside a certain identity group are the same. Just in general, this is a key fact to keep in mind. Even if I do not have the opportunity to be able to meet many people from an identity group, I have to remind myself not to judge a group or create a stereotype for a group based off of one or a few people from that group.
As a teacher, the idea of recordings and stereotypes is something that I will bring into my classroom. I will always have equality play an important role in my classroom. I will not tolerate racism or prejudicial comments. As an English teacher, I suspect that I will have my students read literature that has to do with diversity or at least different identity groups. Within my lesson plans involving those pieces of literature, I will provide activities that have my students face issues of diversity and prejudices. I will also use what I used on how to stop prejudicial comments and jokes while maintaining relationships. This knowledge will hopefully help my students replace some of their incorrect recordings.