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EDUC 410

Final Reflection

During the last year, my growth as a future professional educator has been profound. Being enrolled in the transition to teaching program for health and physical education at Manchester College, I have had the unique experience of seeing these changes occur in a condensed amount of time. Most students in the field of education spend four or more years developing their convictions pertaining to the world of teaching, whereas mine have evolved in less than one. Despite this comparatively short period of time, I am well aware of the changes and how they will continue to affect me in my future career. In this final reflection, I will explain these changes and the road that has led me to them, as well as the impact they will have on my lifelong journey in education.

When I began to take interest in pursuing a career in health and physical education, the content of this field was what initially drew me in. While growing up, physical education was always my favorite class, and probably my favorite part of the day. I was a natural athlete, and the activities in which we participated always served to boost my self-esteem and confidence. As I grew older and began to take sports more seriously, I became more conscientious of my overall health. I began to pay more attention to things like nutrition, proper sleep, and other healthy lifestyle habits. This is what initially drew me to pursue my license to teach. However, this idea would change in time. While taking education classes at Manchester College, I had the opportunity to do many field experiences and have personal interaction with students of all ages in the health and physical education settings. In addition, I had the opportunity to take education classes with classmates from other content areas. Through these experiences, I learned to value

quality education and its impact on the development of students into knowledgeable, well-rounded citizens. This is when I realized that being an expert in my content area was not nearly enough. On the contrary, I realized that possessing knowledge meant nothing if you were not able to relate to students and pass it on in a meaningful way. Through my educational experiences at Manchester College, I developed an appreciation for quality practices in education and the realization that these best practices were far more important than a passion for a specific content area. One must have a passion for education, first and foremost.

Another way in which my thinking has changed towards education during my time at Manchester College is in the way in which I implement discipline. This way of thinking has changed most drastically since beginning my student teaching. Before my time in the classroom, I used to believe that there was a cookie-cutter recipe for discipline that could be implemented the same way in any situation, as long as you went into the situation with a clearly outlined management plan and discipline protocols. While I am still a firm believer in having a clear-cut classroom management plan and guidelines for discipline as well as consequences, I now realize that every situation is different and must be addressed as a unique circumstance. Even though the action taken must be directly in line with my classroom management plan, the way in which it is implemented may depend a great deal upon the class or the personality of the specific student involved. For example, in my middle school physical education placement, I often administer a core workout routine to exercise the mid section of the body. Sometimes, however, students may be executing the exercise incorrectly. If the student is goofing around and neglecting to pay attention, I will address the situation right at that moment in order to stop the behavior and make an example of the student. However, if the student is doing the exercise incorrectly but making a sincere effort, I will address the situation quietly or in private so as not

to embarrass the student and lower their confidence in their abilities. With this being said, I realize it is important not to designate favorites or pick on the “troublemakers”. I now simply realize the importance of reading the situation and acting based on the special circumstances at hand.

A final way in which my thinking has changed during my education at Manchester has been in regards to student relationships. Before I began my field experiences and student teaching, I believed that I could earn the respect of most any student by being friendly and courteous, while demonstrating the level of respect that I wished to receive in return. While this technique works for the majority of students, some need to be persuaded in a sterner manner. I fully realized this with my middle school student teaching placement in physical education, particularly with my eighth grade students. I came to realize that many students at this age had come to develop cocky, cynical attitudes, and were ready to make friends with their teachers only if it meant less work and more fun. Furthermore, these students were often looking for friendships as equals, without an imbalance of power. Obviously in the professional setting, this is impossible. I experienced an example of this first-hand at the beginning of my student teaching placement while I was phasing into full-time teaching. We were in the middle of a unit on ping pong and badminton, and class had just ended. A student who I had been working with urged me to play one more point with him. After explaining that we were out of time, he tried to physically drag me back to the table in an overly playful manner. At this, I had to tell him to stop in a firm manner and explain that I was his teacher and that his actions were unacceptable. He was slightly surprised at this, but understood and caused me no further problems thereafter. Students at this age are actively seeking their identities, and even though they wish to be seen as an equal to their teachers, it is important that they do not forget exactly who is in charge and who

has the authority in the classroom. Sometimes this calls for a stern, up-front approach. It is particularly important that they understand and respect your authority. After experiencing student teaching, I feel that this respect is lost when you are seen as an equal in the students' eyes.

The twenty four CARE objectives that are focused on in the education program at Manchester College revolve around the principles of curriculum, assessment, relationships, and environment. Through my education courses, field experiences, and student teaching, I have had the opportunity to implement these principles into educational settings and put them into practice. I feel that a good curriculum can be demonstrated in lesson plan design. During student teaching, I implemented a lesson in the weight room where we learned muscular anatomy as well as specific machines and motions that worked each major muscle group. This lesson plan was designed effectively and helped me to improve the class curriculum.

The second section of the CARE objectives is assessment. This involves any form or technique utilized to determine student knowledge and ability to use information. During my student teaching, I designed a written exam to determine the students' ability to identify specific muscles and match them with their appropriate weight training machines. This unit began with a lesson implemented in the weight room, as previously mentioned. This assessment gave me a good indication of the students' ability to synthesize their knowledge of human musculature, and allowed me to make changes in the curriculum to accommodate their needs for future learning.

The third section of the CARE objectives is relationships. This is a very broad section due to the fact that most teachers see hundreds of students each day, in addition to colleagues, parents, athletes, and numerous others. Each of these contacts is a unique relationship. It is particularly important for teachers to foster appropriate relationships with each of these

individuals. During my time in Classroom Behavioral management, we were required to create a hypothetical parent letter to the parents of our students, introducing ourselves and briefly outlining the class that their students would be taking as well as rules and procedures. I felt that this assignment was an effective tool and demonstrated my ability to foster positive relationships with parents. These individuals can be great allies, and it is important to be on good terms while keeping them informed.

The final section of the CARE objectives is environment. This is key element in setting the desired tone for the class. During my time in Classroom Behavioral Management, one of my assignments was to design my ideal classroom layout. I designed mine for a health classroom, structuring desks in rows that could easily be turned to create groups. This was done to promote individual success while providing plenty of opportunities for peer collaboration. This assignment taught me how to create a positive classroom environment that would be conducive to obtaining the class's goals and objectives.

Through my experiences and courses at Manchester College, I have discovered the importance of being a lifelong learner. The field of education, as with many other careers, is ever changing, and in order to meet the demands of our students and our culture, we must change with it. This not only means meeting the needs of societal changes, but also keeping up with current research and best practices on how to sharpen the minds of our youth. Our work is never done. It is a fulfilling journey that will continue to evolve and change over the course of time. It is difficult to say where exactly my journey will take me. I could see myself finding a niche in a small rural school, teaching health and physical education during the school day while fulfilling my athletic training and coaching duties in the evenings. However, it is difficult to predict what life has in store for us. The only thing I know for sure is that as educators, our duty is never

finished, and while the task may be daunting at times, it is a task worthy of our best efforts. I look forward to embarking on this journey.