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Fit 4 Learning: MC Pre-Professional Workshop 2007

When the alarm went off at 6:45 am, I awoke not knowing what the day had in store for me. The brochure called the workshop “Fit 4 Learning,” and I anticipated another workshop full of sitting and listening. My thoughts were supported by the projector screen pulled down in the front of the room and rows of seating placed in front of it. Yawning, I tried to think of every possible way to keep myself from daydreaming during the presentation. To my surprise, the speaker began her presentation by making us get up and move to the open area on the other side of the room. From that point on, I knew that this was not going to be an ordinary presentation.

Throughout the presentation, Ms. Summerford kept us up on our feet and moving. Her energy, enthusiasm, and love of what she does were present from the minute she began the workshop to long after our time was over. Striving to achieve these characteristics is one of the main things that I learned from this workshop. It did not matter how tired we were or that we were dressed up and uncomfortable; each and every one of us was active and involved because we were able to feed off of her. It is important for teachers to act this way in the classroom in order to keep their students interested and involved in the learning that is taking place. I also got the feeling from her that I could go up to her and ask her anything that crossed my mind. This is another important trait that teachers should possess. Students should not be afraid to go up to their teacher and ask a question; they should feel free to ask about absolutely anything that they are struggling with in the classroom or at home. Creating that bond with students is key to ensuring that they are receiving the best possible education that the teacher can give them.

A few of our required courses in the education department require us to study the human brain. Through these classes and other outside resources, before coming to this workshop I had a

vague understanding of what music and movement does to the brain. I have always been a strong believer in incorporating music into the classroom because children tend to remember things better when they hear them in song than just by memorizing them. My little brother is a great example. Whenever he listens to the radio, it is a sure bet that he will know at least 80 percent of the songs that are played. However, when it comes to memorizing his bible verse for the week he sometimes struggles. Putting words to music triggers something in our brains that for one reason or another makes us remember it better. Although I do not remember any specifics about what parts of the brain are effected or things along that nature, it was really neat to hear her talk about the specifics of what parts of the brain are influenced by song and dance.

Music will always be a big part of my classroom activity. It may not always have something to do with a specific content or subject area, but I believe that even listening to music while working on a math worksheet will help relax the students and help them to focus. When it comes to working with the songs related to specific subject areas, all of the activities that were presented in this workshop would be extremely beneficial in helping students who are struggling with a certain concept. My favorite activity that we did in the workshop was the Tony Chestnut song that worked with homonyms. Although it can be a little bit hard to understand in the beginning, once students realize what they are trying to do it would be a great reference for them to use. The words are easy to remember, the melody is simple, and the silly movements allow students to have a little fun while they learn.

Bringing enjoyment into the learning process is one of my main goals of using music in the classroom. Today's students do not want to sit in their desks and listen to you speak; they want to be up, moving, and interacting as they learn about each topic. I feel that my musical background will help me tremendously in being capable to do something along this measure.

Being able to play the piano gives me the ability to be in control some of the time as well without having to rely on a CD. It will also come in handy if the students are struggling with a particular song. I will be able to slow it down and go over each part of the song with them so that they understand what they are saying. Knowing the words and what they mean is very important in order for these songs to do what they were meant to do. All that aside, I am aware of the fact that I will have a hard time completely opening up in the beginning. I love to sing, dance, and have a good time; mixing that with my love of teaching only makes things better. Feeling comfortable in my abilities and not being afraid to share them in this capacity is a fairly large hurdle that I need to overcome before I can be successful with this strategy.

Overall this workshop was my favorite out of the three that I have attended during my time at Manchester. I loved being able to get out of my seat, and being able to actually do the songs instead of just be told about them helped me to remember a majority of them and prove the brain theory correct. Workshops were one is expected to just sit and listen become dull and boring very quickly, especially at eight in the morning. It was wonderful to see someone change things up. Ms. Summerford helped me to reinforce in my mind how important teaching students in this manner is. Movement and fun should not be exclusively for physical education or the playground; it is the teacher's responsibility to bring it into the classroom and change the way classrooms are typically viewed. One thing that I would like to have talked about, however, is classroom management techniques to use in these activities to keep students under control. I have been given many ideas on how to keep my students under control in general, but I would have loved to hear her thoughts about keeping students focused and on task while doing these activities. Through the ideas given to me by Ms. Summerford in this workshop, I feel prepared and motivated to integrate music into my classroom every day.