One of the greatest leaders of all time, Harriet Tubman, once spoke these powerful words, “It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.” When I arrived in my first education class in the Fall of 2006, I thought I knew pretty much all I needed to about education. I liked working with children, hours were good for having a family, and best yet, summer vacation. Teaching should be a piece of cake. Even while writing my credo freshman year I had a fantasy element intertwined. Now looking back, I have learned much more than I ever expected to and am continuing to learn everyday, especially about the things in life that count.

For example, that hard to reach student saying, “Thanks Miss B. for letting us do that activity, it was awesome.” By examining my credo, courses taken at Manchester College and the twenty-four CARE objectives including various field experiences, I hope to gain a better understanding of my growth as a lifelong learner and narrow my focus on the important elements in life.

Reflecting back on my education credo, a document stating my various beliefs about the elements of teaching philosophy, I am surprised to see that many aspects I continue to agree with. Some fantastical elements, for example, catch me off guard. I suppose it was the naive attitude of an inexperienced student-educator but I have changed my thinking when it comes to setting behavioral goals. Now that I have seen real-life teachers in action, they are not the ones to set these goals, the children are. For instance, in my 4th grade teaching placement, my students were very familiar with a poster displayed in the classroom meeting area entitled,
POWER. The poster stated that every student in the classroom had the power to be any kind of person they wanted to be whether that be someone they already know or the power to be their own person. The students in this class had the value of power instilled in them because they knew that their class could do anything they wanted in life. Because of this power, there were never serious behavior problems, and seldom minor problems. When the students did misbehave, my cooperating teacher and I went over the power poster and explained that they have a choice and the power to make themselves the best they can be. By experiencing the power model, I changed my thinking that it was the teacher’s responsibility to manage behavior. If you give the students the power, they will handle that. Another fantasy that I had about teaching when reviewing my credo was the time element. Often, my views of teaching were snapshots and not the full picture. For instance I wrote, “My lesson plans will be carefully narrowed down by not only my selections, but by the children’s interests as well.” Yes, it is true I will be pulling from student interest when I can, but one of the responsibilities of a teacher is to follow state standards and school mapping. Many times, these may not be able to involve the majority of what appeals to students. During my 2nd grade student teaching placement, I found this to be true. Half of my students were very interested in mathematics dealing with money, but the other half would rather have been reading or writing. The mapping at the time called mostly for math preparation, therefore, I had to follow my duties as an educator and disappoint part of the class. Thankfully, my teacher helped me to find ways to integrate writing and reading into math to accommodate the interests of every student while saving time, which brings me to my final point. I mention in my credo that a basic knowledge in math, reading, science, and social studies is essential for students, but what I have learned throughout my years at Manchester is you can accomplish this task while making it appealing to students. Any subject can be
integrated with another. Movement, music, and art can be involved in any lesson you can think of if you take a bit of time to think outside the box. My 4th grade cooperating teacher has shown me this. She uses movement and music in many of the lessons she teaches and has one of the highest scores on standardized tests in her school. I can’t give all of the credit to my field experiences though because Manchester College has had an incredible impact on my journey of lifelong learning.

My first day of Methods Block in science class I will never forget. For the first time in a long time I felt like an elementary student myself. We were given some long plastic bags by my professor, Stacy Stetzel and asked to see how many puffs of air it took to blow up the bag. It was funny to see all of our narrow college minds huffing and puffing like the big bad wolf. In short, we were allowed to smack a friend upside the head, as an elementary student would like if they had a big ballon like object, and then throw them across the room. The entire time we were doing this activity, none of us knew we were completing a science experiment. We were just having fun, but we were learning too. Classes like this one have had such a major impact on me. I can’t imagine the type of teacher I would be if I had not had professors whose goal was to teach us everything they know, plus more. Courses at Manchester College pushed us to think outside the lines. Instead of just reading the book “Pancakes, Pancakes” by Eric Carle, why not make the pancakes to intrigue student interest and then further the story by discussing products and services involved in making pancakes? Thanks to teachers like Heather Schilling, I am a teacher who will enrich student minds by carrying my knowledge with me into the classroom. Hey, if you can make a twenty-something be interested in a children’s book, you are guaranteed to get the attention of an elementary student! Thanks to Manchester College professionals, I am prepared to take the education field by storm.
Manchester College provides future educators with a list of twenty-four objectives named CARE. The CARE acronym stands for Curriculum, Assessment, Relationships, and Environment. Throughout my years at Manchester, I have had time to greatly improve my abilities in each area. By writing lesson plans, revising and actually having the opportunity to teach them, I have seen the importance that a quality curriculum will have on a classroom full of students. Many times throughout my student teaching experience I have had to create assessments. When I began teaching, I thought that a test was the only form of assessing a child. Four years later, I have created detailed rubrics, oral and visual assessment tools that gauge the knowledge of student learning better than a multiple choice test ever could. Probably the biggest improvement I have made over the years is through relationships. Educators will meet probably every combination of personality traits there are in the world. Between students, parents, principals, peers and staff, a teacher will have to know how to relate to each unique individual. I for one can say, that I have had several times to practice patience and poise in discussions with all of these people. I’m glad Manchester College was there to guide me as I made these relationships. Finally, I have gained a greater knowledge base on the way a classroom environment should be. Every student should feel comfortable, welcomed and safe in the classroom. My student teaching placement has shown me invaluable information on how to complete this task by creating a clutter-free, clean and family-like atmosphere.

Reflecting back at my knowledge base four years ago, I may have told you I knew most everything there was to know about teaching. The fact is that I didn’t. A lifelong learner never stops learning. Everyday, you will learn something new because no day is exactly like the last. I am proud to say that I attended Manchester College because it has shown me the way to a
lifetime of learning and has shaped me into the educator that any student will look back and say,

“Hey, that was really fun, was that our science lesson?”