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<center>My Growth and Development as an Educator</center>

Ben Sweetland once said, "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own" (College, 2010). I strongly believe that this quote underlies the core values of Manchester College, in which the Department of Education has greatly supported. If it had not been for the love and devotion of my educational professors, then my passion for teaching might not have developed or reached the level that it is currently positioned at. Now I can remember sitting in some of their classrooms three or four years ago. At first it was a bit intimidating; in fact, I thought some of the instructors were a bit extreme. However, I have come to learn that an eager attitude, no matter the intensity, will capture a class' attention better than an unexcited stance. Therefore, it has been my mission since freshman year to try and discover new ways of gaining and maintaining students' attention. Up to this point, I have added many files to my schema, but I have room for many more.

One of the very first education courses I completed, during the fall of my freshman year, was that of Education 111: Introduction to Teaching. The instructor for the course, Professor Eastman, was very well in tune with her subject matter. Prior to teaching at the college level, she had been positioned at an elementary school. However, like many of her colleagues, she felt that her time could be better spent in preparing teacher candidates, like me, for the classroom. One thing that she had us do within her

course was complete a series of field hours, as well as construct a teaching credo, commonly referred to as our teaching philosophy. Due to my limited teaching experience, I began to research various theorists and their beliefs. From the information that I compiled, I chose the methods that I thought best suited my personality. Ever since that point in time, I have had numerous opportunities to implement those strategies. Now as most educators know, this is a continual process that centers upon modifying, applying, and reapplying.

While exploring various philosophical orientations, I found myself identifying with John Dewey's theory of progressivism. Within this belief, he states that "education should be child-centered instead of being focused on the teacher or the content area" (Parkway and Stanford, 2007, p. 87). I then combined this with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, in that all children think differently; therefore, it is crucial to implement a range of learning styles. At the time I wrote my credo, I knew very little about Howard Gardner; however, this has drastically changed over the years. From tutoring, participating in a doctoral research program, and even lesson planning during student teaching, I have come to know each and every one of the eight intelligences. Just knowing the names and descriptions of them is not enough. In fact, it all becomes so real when you are planning and implementing a lesson. After all, if you do not tailor your lessons to the needs of your students, you are ultimately setting them up for an unsuccessful experience.

I will be honest and admit that I have taught a few lessons in an ineffective manner. One such experience occurred in a fourth grade placement, in which I did not know any of the students but one. I was also not acquainted with the teacher, so I

practically walked into the classroom blindly. Since I was not aware of any special needs or particular learning styles, I geared the lesson toward visual learners because that is a common learning mode. However, I quickly found out as I was teaching the lesson that not all students identify with one straight forward intelligence. Instead, students typically learn best through a means of multiple intelligences. Ever since I taught that lesson, I have made sure to include a variety of learning styles. In fact, when students write a lesson plan in the Manchester College format, they are required to include at least four different intelligences. When I taught my lesson, I had not been introduced to that fact, but it sure would have helped immensely if I had been.

Another thing that I included within my teaching credo was the idea of educating children in a culturally sensitive environment. First of all, I grew up in a small town that was not racially diverse; therefore, it was easier to say that I wanted my future classroom to embrace and welcome diversity. However, I had the opportunity, during the fall of my senior year, to experience being placed in a culturally diverse setting. I was slightly nervous at first, but by the end of my week long placement, I found myself not wanting to leave Study Elementary School. Within this school, I mostly worked with Black and Hispanic students. In fact, only one student in the room of twenty-four was White. Nevertheless, I respected each and every one of my students. Their skin color did not matter to me, in that each child deserves the same quality of education. On the other hand, it is important for students to learn about the different cultures that people come from. For instance, I would start my unit of study, over such matters of ethnicities, by discussing those that are contained within my classroom. Afterwards, I would move on to nearby towns and cities, in which other societies could be talk about. It is crucial for

students to understand these differences, but if no one opts to talk about them positively, then they may come to think on it in a negative way.

Speaking of disapproving approaches, I can attest to the fact that classroom management is not something learned primarily through books but through experience. In Education 360, Classroom Behavior Management, we mostly read about varying discipline techniques from Harry Wong to Fred Jones, as well as other theorists. In my opinion, this class was a bit overwhelming, in that there are numerous theorists and each have their own unique idea as to how a situation should be handled. Within these varying proposals, there were many subtopics. Now the only problem that I found with reading these models was in thinking of which idea I would actually apply to the real life situation. For example, when it comes to setting the rules at the beginning of the year, who should be involved in this process? Should the teacher formulate the rules in advanced or should the whole class be included? Harry and Rosemary Wong suggest having students create the rules along with the teacher (Wong and Wong, 2005, p. 148); however, Morrish states that "students are supposed to learn rules, not determine them" (Charles, 2008, p. 230).

At the beginning of my the 2009-2010 school year, I spent some time in my first and fourth grade student teaching placement, in which I was able to see how both classrooms established their rules. From my observations, I came to agree with the Wong's. I think that students should be involved in the process, that way when a student does break a rule, the teacher can explain that they helped create it in the first place. Also, students can be creative in their thinking, in that they may come up with something you had never thought of. This also brings up a good point in saying that rules may need to be

amended throughout the school year. For instance, in my fourth grade placement, I had instituted the rule of keeping your hands to yourself and out of your mouth. A few weeks after I had explained this rule, I saw a male student take the end off of a marker and blow into it, causing a mini spray painting scene. Due to this incident, I modified the rule so that it included all objects. To say the least, this student has not repeated the incident, at least not to my knowledge.

After spending four years at Manchester College, I would have to say that I could not have received a better education anywhere else. I was lucky enough to have caring and understanding professors, all of whom are greatly devoted to their careers. If it had not been for the many study sessions and in office help, as well as the responding to late night emails, then I might not have survived the teaching program. However, my instructors never failed to let me down; when I needed their help, they came to the rescue. My only hope is that my students think this highly of me. I think that many of my students would admit that I have helped them out at one time or another, whether it has been talking about a family issue at home or about the assignments within the classroom. Nevertheless, I try to vary my approach within the classroom; after all, who would want to come to school and listen to the same monotonous voice drone on and on? For that reason, I have utilized the school's Elmo within some of my lessons. However, the technology is very limited at Manchester Elementary School, but that has not stopped me from teaching at my optimum level. So wherever I end up teaching, I know that I will not let the lack of funds bring me down, for instructing does not have to center around the best of technologies, only the best teachers.

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