

Only Time Will Tell

By Kristin Blain

John Cotton Dana, an American librarian and museum director, once said, "Who dares to teach must never cease to learn." In today's technologically advanced society, that is reaching more towards globalization, there is no choice but to continue to learn. Especially being an educator, one who has chosen to care, nurture, develop and expand the minds of youth, you mustn't cease to learn. Good teaching is indeed several things, but perhaps most importantly it is having a passion for learning and conveying that passion to students.

I would be a hypocrite to say that my learning was drawing to a close as I near the completion of my master's degree. Although it may be the last time for a while that I take a graduate level course, to allow time to grow my family and recoup the bank account, it is by no means a closure to acquiring knowledge. I feel a great sense of pride and fulfillment knowing that within my first five years of teaching I have completed my graduate coursework, yet I also feel a little apprehensive about it ending.

I have been a student for the last twenty-two years of my life and to think that I will soon be able to enjoy evenings, weekends, holidays, and summer vacations without my laptop and a stack of books, is exciting yet will be an adjustment all at the same time. I was humbled at the amount of new information I learned in my graduate studies even though the courses were not all that distant from completion of my undergrad work. Trends, policies, and implementation of the Common Core State Standards were due in part to the amount of new information I learned. I also learned a great deal by collaborating and researching topics of interest in each course. Perhaps what I learned most was how to become a more technological savvy learner and teacher through the completion of online coursework.

Pursuing a degree all online was rewarding, challenging, and demanding. Initially I thought sitting at home in my pajamas drinking a cup of coffee and doing some grad work was fabulous. It got even better when I could write a post or compose an action research essay sitting under the starlit sky by the crackle of a bonfire drinking a glass of cabernet. Although those moments were appreciated, and not getting in a vehicle to travel to another classroom was nice too, I did miss the face to face collaboration and discussion.

At times I even loathed being in a traditional classroom when technology decided to be...well, technology. Slow wi-fi, router troubles, Trojan viruses, lost files, and projects too large to upload via email or Angel. Yes, in the midst of paradise were sheer moments of stress, panic, and anxiety. But, I managed to survive through it all

and have become better with time management, wrestling technology, researching scholarly journals on the World Wide Web much like finding a needle in a haystack, and learning a wealth of knowledge along the way. Not only can I say that I learned a lot in regards to my profession, but I learned copious amounts about myself as a learner as well.

Once the New Year rolls around and I am not blocking out time to read a new course syllabus, I will instead be looking to see what opportunities are available at my local district's ISD. I have heard of great opportunities there in the past, but afraid to add one more thing to my plate, I passed. I am looking forward to taking the knowledge I have gained and applying it to future learning opportunities and expanding upon it. I will also welcome any chance that I have to learn more in the field of education that will help shape me into the master teacher that I hope to one day become.

So although my "formal education" is coming to a pause, in no way, shape, or form, is it coming to an end. I look forward to what endeavors I will come upon and journey into, and I am eager to see what I will learn next. In the future to I can see myself considering another tuition bill. Another masters? A PhD as recommended by some professors in the past? Only time will tell. But, I know one thing is for certain, learning is not a spectator sport and this is something that I will not soon forget and hope to pass on to my students.