

RUNNING HEAD: DREAM OF A LIFETIME

Dream of a Lifetime: From Practice to Theory

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“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” –E. Roosevelt

Overview – Dream of a Lifetime

Having just completed my 37th year in public education, I want to stay on the cutting edge in educational computing and continue to return to the educational community the knowledge and expertise that I have gained through my work in curriculum and instruction. While completing my postgraduate studies, out of a sense of desire to learn all that I possibly could about an emerging field, I developed a professional desire for challenge. The challenge emerged as my role became increasingly that of a curriculum specialist and human resource manager charged with modeling technology integration. In this paper I will explore the challenges and opportunities I faced as I studied curriculum theory and learned and modeled technology best practices in preparation for obtaining a doctorate of education in curriculum and instruction with an educational computing emphasis. This doctoral program of study has provided me the skills necessary to be a 21st century educator.

Introduction – Dream On

Since I began my advanced degree work in September, 2003, I have been able to obtain an Education Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Educational Computing and have concluded all formal coursework required to complete my plan of study for an Educational Doctorate. That is more than I ever dreamed I could accomplish in such a short time. There is definitely a possibility that I will be able to achieve my dream.

My earliest recollection of any desire to seek a doctorate in education was during the 1996-97 school year when I was selected as one of twelve pilot project teachers to receive the WVDE/IBM Reinventing Education grant award. I recall my principal, Sarah Brown, calling me to her office and telling me that she had a grant that I needed to write. She said, “You get a laptop.” That was all I needed to hear. I took a look at the grant and realized the grant application

was more involved than any I had ever written. I stopped at the local school board office that afternoon and talked to my Title I supervisor, Richard Lawrence, to see if he had any grants he had previously been awarded that would assist me in writing this grant. Richard told me that he had not ever seen a grant that modeled the specifications outlined in the Reinventing Education grant and advised me to “write my dream.” That is exactly what I did. That dream coming true was what made me realize that anything is possible and placed me on the path I am on today.

After receiving certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in Early Adolescent Mathematics in 2001, I began the process of applying to the Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program available from Marshall University Graduate College. Having received advice from a current program candidate who said to me, “Debbie, you have achieved National Board Certification, getting your doctorate should be easy. Go ahead and enroll in classes and work on the application to the program.” I enrolled in the first technology course available that semester; in fact I enrolled in two classes in the Fall 2003 semester. I later wrote in my journal, “Dr. Pauley says ‘You Gotta Wanna’ and I did. I was determined to not let anything get in the way of my dream.

My involvement in the Reinventing Education Project had developed in me a thirst for knowledge that is never completely quenched where technology is concerned. My father always told me that “the day you wake up and have nothing new to learn, is the day you begin to die.” I have often thought of that advice and try to think at the end of each day what I have learned that is new. My dream is to be able to give back to educators I work with as much as I have been given over my 37-year career in public education. I think I still have much to offer and the work I have done throughout the doctoral program has enabled me to grow professionally, particularly since my master’s degree was earned in 1978 and the only technology that I integrated into the curriculum at that time was a calculator!

From the first class I took to the most recent one in which I am enrolled, I can truly say the dreams I have experienced along the way have been mostly pleasant. Sometimes they were like recurring dreams, particularly when I traveled the four-hour round trip trek to Charleston three or four times a week and arrived to find class had been cancelled. Some classes have been more worthwhile than others. “How much more beneficial this class would be online” was a journal entry one semester when I drove to Charleston three times a week. That semester one class did not end until 10:00 p.m. and the instructor often kept us past 10:30 p.m. I could have saved four hours on the road a week and the same goals could have been accomplished in an online format. Throughout my advanced degree work, I was fortunate to be able to plan my courses so that I could take at least one course online most semesters. That is probably the only disappointment I have about the program. I realize that face-to-face meetings are beneficial, but the opportunity to gain the same knowledge in an online environment is critical – in fact I believe it is a necessary skill in the 21st century and with the price of fuel and the long drive I make, almost a necessity.

I continued to work toward being accepted into the doctoral program. I repeatedly took the MAT exam (three times). And repeatedly, I did not receive the required score for entrance into the program. I began to feel that my dream was just that, a dream. One day when I was talking to Dr. Pauley, he encouraged me to take the MAT test again. I indicated to him that it would not make a difference, no matter how hard I studied, the MAT test was just not for me. I reluctantly decided to take his advice and purchased yet another study guide. This time the book that had been recommended to me by an adjunct faculty member made the difference. *Cracking the MAT* provided me the skills necessary to achieve an acceptable score. I will never forget the call I received from Dr. Pauley. I wrote in my journal, “You finally made it; Dr. Pauley says you knocked the socks off the MAT!” I had actually more than doubled my previous scores. I am

sure that the strategies learned from the book were what enabled me to make an acceptable score, and I now recommend the resource to others who are going to take the test.

Even though I had not been accepted into a program, I had not wanted to waste any time. I still wanted to take classes that quenched my thirst for knowledge in the area of technology and helped me turn my dreams into reality. I took classes for two years before I was accepted into the program and completed my EdS after my first semester in the program. That was one of the 'perks' of the doctoral program that occurred as a result of my good planning and the advice of my EdS Advisor, Dr. Pauley. Once I was accepted, I was able to verify my plan.

The EDF 719 class that I was required to take after being accepted into the Curriculum and Instruction doctoral program was beneficial in getting me on track and verified that my self-advised plan was on target. However, while in the process of getting my plan of study approved, another challenge occurred. Actually it was like one of those dreams that when you awake, you hoped it was just a bad dream. I was informed that the courses I had completed before being accepted into the doctoral program would not count toward my completion of the plan of study; three more courses were added. I still had the 'You Gotta Wanna' that Dr. Pauley so often talked about and had just experienced the consequences of being the self-advised one. A note that I placed in my journal after a session of planning with him said,

Dr. Pauley thoughtfully replies to me and the way I plan my coursework when he says, 'Be careful oh self-advised one!' I thought so far I had done a pretty good job of taking the right courses. I probably should have taken more courses required for C & I before I took all of those technology courses, but I took them when they were offered and that is important. I will persevere and survive the process!

This challenge would not interrupt my plans. I wrote in my journal, "It just might make my work in the program last a little longer and have a silver lining." I have to give credit to my chair, Lisa Heaton; my EdS advisor, Rudy Pauley; and my outside doctoral committee member, Sarah Brown; for keeping me focused and encouraging me to continue. Lisa advised me how to

best accomplish what was required to complete the program by suggesting some classes that required me to utilize the skills I had developed through the courses in my area of emphasis – educational computing. Rudy encouraged me to take the MAT, reminded me that I needed to be careful when advising myself, and repeatedly stated, “You Gotta Wanna.” Sarah provided me feedback on many of my ideas and offered words of encouragement every time I ran into her. Finally, my plan of study was approved and I could see that my dream might actually become a reality. I did not realize it at the time, but I now know that the obstacles that I encountered along the way to my portfolio defense actually contributed to my professional growth.

The mission of the doctoral program is to prepare practitioners to be reflective educators and researchers who contribute to the field of education. Even though the National Board certification process required that I become a reflective educator, I did not realize that reflecting on my teaching practice would be such an integral part of the doctoral program, one that definitely made me grow professionally. I recall my interview before being accepted into the doctoral program. I was asked about how important I thought being a reflective practitioner was. I do not remember exactly what my answer was but I know that I referred to how important it was to the process of becoming a National Board Certified Teacher. At the time I was interviewed for the program, I did not realize that I would value reflecting on my practice as I taught online courses developed by my peers, as I worked in collaboration with my chair, and even more beneficial as I developed and taught an online course in collaboration with faculty.

Scholarship – Dreams Fulfilled

Dewey was one of the earliest to consider the nature of reflection. He considered reflective thought to be “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (1933, p. 118). Dewey indicated that reflection is a dynamic thought process which is

aggravated by situations of uncertainty, doubt or confusion and involves “an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity” (1933, p. 12). My reflections throughout the program have enabled me to make sense of what I have learned and given me the foundation on which to build my dream.

I awakened one day to find that I was considered a curriculum specialist, something I had not considered until I was enrolled in one of the curriculum courses I took from Dr. Pauley. He had announced to the class that we were ‘curriculum workers.’ That is what I highlighted in my journal. Since faculty members are committed to creating a community of scholars through mentoring I realized that Dr. Pauley was mentoring me to be a curriculum specialist. I discovered this answer to my dreams had occurred as I spent time balancing my academic curriculum work with my full time curriculum work. I now feel that I am developing my career as a curriculum specialist. I am beginning to fulfill the dream of engaging in collaborative research, and have maintained a focus on sound educational practices throughout the program.

Often the demands my work made upon my time interfered with the academic demands I met along the way to completion of course work. Despite the time demands, I was determined to finish my courses on time. I was able to do that, but not being in a structured class has limited my self-scheduled portfolio preparation time. I finally had to give myself a deadline to complete the portfolio and brief paper. My chair, who is committed to creating a community of scholars through mentoring, is the one who continually prods me along. If it were not for her gentle reminders, I suspect I would still be in the planning stages of my portfolio rather than preparing for my qualifying assessment.

The preparation of my portfolio consumed much of my spare time and again interfered with my work. I found myself recording in my journal,

If there were more hours in a day, I would still be behind. It seems that everything is due all at the same time. How could I possibly have agreed to do so much –

D2L Using Handheld Computers in the Classroom facilitation, design and facilitate Tech Standards in the Classroom for WebCT, GATE Technology Sessions on Geometer's Sketchpad, develop a proposal for the SITE conference, CRSI annual report due? What do I do first? How do I finish it all by the proposed deadlines? Somehow I will manage.

And I did manage to finish everything on time. In spite of the challenges, my dreams of completing my degree before I retire are a realistic possibility. I **will** wake up from this recurring dream in a year or so and realize I am no longer dreaming.

As I assembled my portfolio and reflected on my coursework, I found myself wondering if I had taken curriculum courses before I took technology courses what might have been different in my professional growth and development as a curriculum worker. I suspect I would have had a better foundation for curriculum theory and my reflective paper would be entitled "From Theory to Practice" rather than "From Practice to Theory"!

While preparing for my presentation for The Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) Conference and writing a paper for publication in conference proceedings in collaboration with faculty, I learned a great deal. I knew the portfolio was designed to encourage scholarly activity and promote professional growth experiences for doctoral candidates. I also knew the Residency Portfolio at Marshall University replaced the use of comprehensive exams in 2003. The purpose of my paper was to examine the issues related to the design and delivery of an online course from a course conventionally taught in a face-to-face environment. This enabled me to select and compile authentic evidence for the Residency Portfolio, demonstrating a clear connection between the doctoral program and professional growth and development. Before I could begin writing the paper, I had to research portfolio assessment. Following is the research I quoted in my paper, "Facing the Challenge of Developing an Online 'Tech Standards for Teachers' Course."

Mokharti and Yellin (1996) found that "the majority of their elementary education candidates reported that the use of portfolio assessment promoted more

collaborative learning (86%), increased student reflection (71%), and aided in the establishment of a psychologically secure environment in the classroom (63%)” (as cited in Williams, Davis, Metcalf, & Covington, 2003, ¶ 3). Collins (1990), Shannon & Boll (1996), and Wolf (1991) reported the portfolio to be both a qualitative and authentic assessment method (as cited in Cobia et al., 2005, p. 244). The portfolio is often used because some quantitative methods do not allow educators to assess what students know and can do. The portfolio can measure students’ development over time, in the context of actual practice, and in relation to students’ own understanding of their growth and “can play a significant role in...the evaluation process” (Rogers and Danielson, 1996, ¶ 4). “It should carefully and thoughtfully document a set of accomplishments attained over an extended period. And, it should be an ongoing process conducted in the company of mentors and colleagues” (Wolf, 1996, ¶ 5). Cobia et al. (2005) found that the doctoral portfolio has the “potential to change student-faculty relationships and interactions in positive ways. Faculty and students have formal opportunities, outside of class time, for engaging in reflection and discussion about students’ goals, progress toward goals, and mutual responsibilities for meeting those professional goals” (p. 253).

The collaboration with Dr. Lisa Heaton, Sandra Orr, Robin Lewis, Ray Singleton, Debra Young, Dixie Billheimer, and Kim Sigman in a symposium presentation, “Technology Use and Professional Growth through the Residency Portfolio” was definitely a challenge. The proposal was the easy part; the ‘brief paper’ for conference proceedings was what created the challenge for me. I had absolutely no literature on the topic I was presenting and had to find research to support the portfolio process. Once that was accomplished, writing the paper was easy.

This collaboration probably provided me the greatest opportunity to grow professionally and reflect on my practice more than any other activity throughout my academic career. Not only had I developed an online class, taught the class, reflected on my practice, and made revisions to the course, I had submitted a proposal in collaboration with peers and faculty for the SITE conference. From my accepted paper for publication, “Facing the Challenge of Developing an Online ‘Tech Standards for Teachers’ Course” I noted,

The challenges that were presented as I designed and taught ‘Technology Standards for Teachers’ definitely contributed useful artifacts that will be used when I develop and defend my portfolio. Perhaps more beneficial than the artifacts gathered for my portfolio, is the collaboration with faculty and peers that took place during the design and teaching of this online course... My Residency

Portfolio will demonstrate that I have accepted the responsibility for my own learning. The experience has made me become more reflective and grow professionally. This can be attributed to the doctoral portfolio development and my upcoming portfolio defense process. In fact this activity contributes to all criteria measured in the Residency Portfolio at Marshall University: collaboration, depth of understanding, reflection, scholarship, and communication. The real ‘test’ will occur when I defend my portfolio in the coming months.

It was not until I was on the stage, first awaiting my turn to present, and then listening to the presentations of my fellow doctoral candidates as they each presented “Technology Use and Professional Growth through the Residency Portfolio” that I realized the impact the past three years made on my professional growth. As I listened to Dr. Heaton describe the traditional Marshall University graduate student as a professional, and heard each professional tell their story, I began to understand that the mission and goals of the doctoral program at Marshall University Graduate College were being met for each candidate in different ways.

I could not be associated with a more ideal doctoral program; it is one that respects me as an educator and the contributions I make to the field of education. I am encouraged to collaborate with others. The expectations for my being successful and achieving my dreams are clear. This recent opportunity to present at an international conference enabled me to work with a community of scholars that Dr. Heaton has nurtured and mentored through the portfolio development process. As I listened to the challenges and successes each of us have had as we proceed through our program of study, I realize the faculty has an interest in each of us, what pride they must feel as we succeed and achieve our dreams.

Other Professional/Academic Pursuits – Beyond My Wildest Dreams

Co-Teaching a Course in Collaboration with Faculty

My first opportunity to co-teach a course with a faculty member came when my friend Dixie Billheimer left her faculty position at MUGC for employment elsewhere. I was contacted by Dr. Heaton to see if I would be willing to teach “The Internet and Multimedia” a course that

Dixie and Kim Sigman had designed. I readily agreed, not thinking about what I might be getting myself into. I had never taught a WebCT course in Vista and little did I know that I would need to take the course in order to teach it. This is a practice I developed long ago when beginning to facilitate online learning for PBS. With the help of Dixie and Dr. Heaton, I managed to survive the course facilitation and learned a tremendous amount about technology and WebCT Vista.

One reflection from a participant in the course said,

This class has been a quite different learning experience, even for myself, who is fairly computer literate. In choosing a few assignments for a portfolio, I would definitely choose the three that had the most impact on me. As for my personal learning and goals, I probably got the most out of the Webquest Assignment, the Integration Assignment, and the Scavenger Hunt Project. I already knew a lot about how to search, and use a computer, but the integration and ideas stemming from the above projects and assignments made it worthwhile. I am going to continue searching for and possibly contributing to the Webquests and Internet Scavenger Hunts as well as other possible uses of technology that I may not have thought about in planning! Because of those reasons, I felt the class was worthwhile and time well spent.

Designing and Co-Teaching a Course in Collaboration with Faculty

The design and facilitation of Basic Technology Standards for Teachers, CIEC 561, was my next collaborative adventure providing me an opportunity to co-teach a course with a faculty member. I learned that no matter how many WebCT Vista courses you take, you are not prepared to design and facilitate one. The first challenge faced with developing the course for the WebCT platform was importing the previously designed web pages into WebCT. Most of the content for the online course had already been developed. The web pages had been designed with a border that acted like a frame within WebCT and caused the text to not be visible on small monitors. Because of this design issue, it was necessary to redesign all graphics and all ten web pages. Once that task was completed, I had to learn how to use the WebCT Vista platform for creating each learning module. This is when I had to rely on the experience of my chair and other university staff. Prior to this experience, I had taken many courses using WebCT and taught

several, however designing one was a completely new venture. It did not take long to learn that I needed to have files organized which made the process of uploading pretty simple compared to facilitating the course.

The feedback provided by participants gave me valuable information in revising the course which I am presently facilitating again. There is one module that I am considering removing and Dr. Heaton agrees with me. I am awaiting feedback from participants that are enrolled in the course this semester before I make the final decision. In order to develop the skill of online communication participants are asked to open a web-based email account, subscribe to a listserv, and communicate through WebCT Vista mail. No matter how hard I try, it is difficult to make some participants understand the difference between web-based mail and WebCT Vista mail. I think my directions are very clear until I encounter a participant that does not see the differences. I am currently working on revising the “mail assignment” to develop the skills and use WebCT completely to accomplish that task.

There are still challenges that exist: updating to more recent research for the discussion topics and keeping links updated. I have located more reliable tutorials for the assignments but the chance still exists that the sites may move. Incorporating a site such as Atomic Learning or Riverdeep that would provide online instruction for productivity software might have been more beneficial to the course design, but there is a cost involved with using those sites and some of the materials are somewhat outdated. Other options are to purchase online curriculum that is already developed for WebCT or write my own tutorials. At the present time, I am not considering that. I suspect the course will have to be updated to incorporate the new ISTE standards, and that will be done should I be asked to facilitate the course again.

Teaching a Course in Collaboration with Faculty

The collaboration with Dr. Lisa Heaton to develop resources for and facilitate "Integrating the Internet into Instruction," "Introduction to WebCT," and "Data Collection and Analysis Using Excel" for "Technology Integration for Mathematics Teachers" - Governor's Academy for Teaching Excellence (GATE) provided me the opportunity to work with Dr. Heaton in a way that I had not previously experienced. Prior to planning these sessions I had mostly just taken graduate level courses from her. Now I was given the opportunity to work with her as we served on the Technology Subcommittee for the Center for Professional Development to plan and design professional development sessions for GATE 2006. The committee members worked closely to develop training sessions for those who would attend GATE 2006 sessions across the state. In addition to facilitating the sessions with Dr. Heaton I was the recipient of her mentoring as I developed and presented my Geometer's Sketchpad Session for GATE. The feedback she gave me was very beneficial. She provided me feedback to enable me to provide resources to the participants that were valuable. My journal entry says,

Dr. Heaton is very thorough when she reviews work I have submitted. I value her feedback. She is great when it comes to noticing details. She sent me the following feedback on my math resource list I developed for the GATE Technology sessions. I took days to put this list together and she provided me with feedback almost immediately. I really appreciate the speed with which she responds to my requests! Her email response to my submission states: 'Thanks so much! This is a tremendous help. By combining your list and mine, there should be plenty for people to explore'.

This opportunity to work with Dr. Heaton enabled me to see that she maintains her focus on sound educational ideas. Another journal entry indicates how she helps me grow professionally,

She is so knowledgeable in her field; I only hope that I can learn as much from her as I can. I am afraid there is not enough time for that, but while I am attending MUGC, I will take advantage of all the opportunities available to me. I only wish Dr. Heaton offered more technology courses. It seems that there are not enough available to learn all I need to learn.

As I think back about my work in the area of educational computing, I now know that I took more courses in the area than were required for my area of emphasis, but felt I had to quench my thirst for knowledge. Even though I planned my courses based on what was offered each semester, I took most of my technology courses early and realize that it might have been better if I had taken more curriculum courses early in my program. My schedule of coursework developed more practice to theory than theory to practice, but much of that had to do with the scheduling of classes and was beyond my control.

Other Collaborative Activity

In collaboration with faculty member Dr. Fran Simone, I developed a grant as part of my course work in the “Writing for Publication” class she taught. The result of that class was the development of a grant that was submitted to the Benedum Foundation and awarded to West Liberty State College and RESA I. The "No Teacher Left Behind" Grant has trained National Board Certified Teachers as mentors and readers. The grant has also funded recruiting National Board candidates across southern West Virginia and in the Wheeling area and provided them online and distance support via videoconferencing as they seek certification from National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

I often think about the reason I wanted to become a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). The self-reflective process that contributed to my professional growth required me to look at my teaching practice, determine what worked, and change the strategies that were not effective. That process has carried over into the doctoral program including both the face-to-face and online content I designed for National Board candidates. I never anticipated providing support to other candidates. The reflective process enabled me to make changes to meet the needs of each individual candidate and provide them the best support possible pertaining to their certificate area.

No matter how hard I try to get out of that support role for National Board candidates, I end up providing support to more candidates. From my journal I found the following entry,

Here I go again, helping write a grant to support National Board candidates. I suppose the reason I believe in this so much is because I want to provide the support that I did not have available to me. The online WebCT support that I was given was minimal. The support from my reader and mentor was almost non-existent. I guess I want to make sure that other candidates have better support than I had and that they do not have to drive 4 hours once a month or more often to meet with their mentor. The distant videoconferencing support is awesome!

Not only am I mentoring and facilitating candidates this year, I am working with RESA I to include the support in an Math Science Partnership grant for math and science teachers that was submitted in March and awarded just last week. I actually am looking forward to working with more National Board candidates. I recently attended the ceremony for the new 2006 National Board candidates and as I looked around the room I could see those family members who were as proud as I was to be part of that family of NBCTs. What amazes me is to watch how the support has grown across the state in 10 years. If I can help anyone in any small way, that is another way I can give back to the education community a little of what I have received throughout my career.

Additional Job Related Activities – Dreams with Silver Linings

Additional job related activities that support the practice to theory theme of my qualifying assessment include developing and delivering "Alternative Assessment," "Using Inspiration to Meet Standards," "Professional PowerPoint," and "Looking at the Power of Professional Development - The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" to CRSI Teacher Leaders. Each of these activities enabled me to design and deliver professional development sessions that effectively modeled integrating technology into the curriculum, which I have learned as I progressed through this doctoral program can extend learning in powerful ways.

The “Alternative Assessment” session utilized an activity that involved participants in looking at current research available on alternative forms of assessment. Taking the role of the student, participants worked in groups to create their own rubric using chocolate chip cookies as the items to be assessed. Once the rubric was designed, participants were introduced to the online Rubistar rubric generator and given time to create the electronic rubric. I wrote in my journal following that session,

Teresa B. said that was the best session on alternative assessment she had ever attended. I never thought of having my students design their own rubric. That really puts the monkey on their back. The students are usually much harder on themselves than I ever think of being. I can not wait to do this with my kids next week.

“Using Inspiration to Meet the Standards” provided the participants with the research report prepared by Appalachian Educational Laboratory on the review of scientifically based research on graphic organizers. They were also given the state standards match for math and science and training on ways to use Kidspiration and Inspiration to support technology and content standards.

The “Professional PowerPoint” training session provided the teacher leaders with appropriate formatting skills and criteria for effective PowerPoint presentations. The session was approached by designing a PowerPoint that depicted appropriate and inappropriate uses of multimedia presentations and the research that supported effective designs. Once participants were familiar with the software, they were provided a template for a presentation that they were to design displaying their leadership skills. The teacher leaders were provided with a thumb drive and an assignment to work collaboratively in state groups to design a presentation to provide district superintendents and district contacts that would attend the Coalfield Rural Systemic Initiative (CRSI) Summer Institute an overview of their leadership skills. As one participant said,

“I now feel comfortable using PowerPoint and can make sure my students don’t kill the audience with PowerPoint ever again.”

“Looking at the Power of Professional Development – The Good, The Bad, The Ugly” was a session I designed to find out what the teacher leaders knew about professional development. They were asked to brainstorm their professional development experiences and categorize them as good, bad, or ugly. The teachers were provided a problem-based scenario and given one hour to prepare a 20-minute presentation on the characteristics of high quality professional development. My previous training in Problem-Based Learning and my graduate level curriculum work enabled me to create a successful training session.

The RESA I Math Coaches Training Workshop developed as a model for the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) provided literacy coaches with skills to enable math coaches and mentors to be more efficient and effective in their role of academic coaching through their involvement in the 2-day conference. The particular training I provided, entitled “*T³ Tools, Techniques, Technology*” provided participants with training on Microsoft Outlook and tracking hours using Outlook.

"Using Handheld Computers in the Classroom" course facilitation for WVDE has contributed to my professional growth in several ways. In this course, designed by Education Development Center, participants are introduced to Palm handhelds and educational applications. Participants explore the use of handheld computers for curricular use across grade-level and subject-area, as well as for administration and classroom management. Educators in this workshop also consider the use of handhelds to meet individual learning needs of all students. Participants complete the workshop with a lesson plan that integrates handheld computer use in their own classrooms. My journal entry sums up my experiences training for and facilitating three online courses,

As a certified Palm Education Training Coordinator (PETC) I constantly learn from facilitating these online courses. As a facilitator in this term's online professional development, I have learned more than I ever anticipated. The participants jump in and help one another sometimes before I have the chance. This group of Technology Integration Specialists certainly has a lot to offer the teachers they work with. I wish I had been able to have worked in my school as a TIS. I often think when posting my responses to participants what a wonderful online learning community we have. I feel I have contributed some to developing this community of learners, but it is the participants who have the skills to troubleshoot their particular device who make the difference. With only nine in the class, it is essential that they work with troubleshooting the Palm handheld they use. For one reason, I don't have some that they use and for another, sometimes no matter how hard I try, I cannot replicate the same problem they are experiencing!

This is one of the best learning experiences I have ever had and hope to continue facilitating these courses. I can't imagine having more than 10 or 15 participants, but after my online course experiences of late, I am sure I can handle more if necessary.

Conclusion – From Dreams to Reality

Holly (1984, p.7) found that “Writing to reflect involves a cyclical pattern of reflection: first, reflecting on experiences as you write; and then reflecting on the journal entries themselves at some later stage, which may provide material for further reflection, and so on. (as cited in Andrusyszyn, 1997, ¶ 13). This paper was written to display the progress made as I learned and modeled technology best practices in preparation for obtaining a doctorate of education in curriculum and instruction with an educational computing emphasis. I attempted to illustrate the skills I developed as a practitioner by reflecting on the experiences encountered as a curriculum specialist. I included some of the mile markers of my teaching career that contributed to my success and how these experiences laid the foundation for my doctoral work. This work has allowed me to develop and model the technology best practices I plan to prove effective as I begin my research on the 21st century skills and tools used by educators as they integrate technology into the curriculum.

Reflection and learning go hand in hand. As I reflected on my doctoral experiences in depth, my learning and understanding also expanded. The knowledge I have obtained through this reflective process cannot be measured. Perhaps the most beneficial reflections occurred with the online courses I designed and/or facilitated. The reflective thoughts recorded enabled me to transform information obtained from course participants into improved course design. According to Andrusyszyn (1997), I was able to “shift to higher levels of cognitive and affective understanding” (Conclusion section, ¶ 1). Reflection through journal writing offered me a valuable tool to improve my online course designs. It gave me the opportunity to analyze what worked, what did not work, and make changes accordingly that I otherwise would not have been able to make. This process has prepared me to return to the educational community the knowledge and expertise that I have gained through my work in curriculum and instruction in the field of educational computing.

John Dewey said “Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is, not a preparation for life; education is life itself” (Thinkexist.com Quotations, n.d.). Today’s students need to be risk takers, to be able to think critically, to be able to work independently as well as with others, to be caring and giving, to be courageous, to be able to communicate, to be problem-solvers, to exhibit a desire to be a lifelong learner, and to love life and most importantly have a passion for what they do.

As a 21st century curriculum worker, I must afford each learner I come in contact with the opportunity to develop to his or her maximum potential. As a 21st century curriculum worker I must address the challenge of bringing personal narrative and subject matter knowledge together in a teachable moment to inspire learning in the classroom through technology integration. The extent to which I can become a curriculum developer is dependent upon my knowledge of the curriculum field and the substance of my personal narratives of lived experience. The

experiences I have had in this program have provided me with the skills of a 21st century educator and I hope to inspire others to be 21st century educators as well. The 21st century has arrived, the future belongs to me, I believe in the beauty of my dreams. .

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