**DIAGNOSIS EdD: THE BEGINNING OF A NEW JOURNEY**

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by

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Introduction

After I completed my master’s degree in dietetics, I wanted to continue my education and eventually complete a terminal degree. In 2009, I passed my registration exam to be a registered dietitian (RD). At this point, I decided to begin my career as a clinical dietitian at a local hospital. After about five years in the acute care setting, I switched gears and accepted a job at an outpatient diabetes education center. During these years, I was able to study and gain experience to obtain my certified diabetes educator (CDE) certification in 2014. This was a major goal I set for myself in my career. When one goal is accomplished I move on to the next; however, I wasn’t sure what my next goal was going to be. In July 2015, I was offered a tenure-track faculty position in the Department of Dietetics at Marshall University; ending up where I wanted to be, teaching my passion—dietetics!

During my undergraduate career, I was encouraged by many professors to apply to medical school. While I tossed around this idea, I didn’t think medical school would be for me. I always thought I would get a PhD in dietetics or nutrition. With a small change in my career path and some research, I decided an EdD would be the right path for me.

In this reflection, I want to walk you through “Diagnosis EdD”. As a registered dietitian who has been living with type 1 diabetes for 19 years, the best way for me to explain my doctoral experience is through this new diagnosis.

How do I become a doctoral student? (AKA: the initial “doctor” visit)

I started this journey during my first year as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dietetics at Marshall. After being out of school for seven years, it was time to complete another college application and entrance exam. I completed my Graduate Record Exam in 2008, which was a stressful experience, so this time I decided to prepare for the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). My preparations occurred for a solid three months, which included a plane ride to Italy and back. I was able to meet lots of fellow travelers who were interested in discussing what the MAT exam was, so I spent most of my time talking about the exam rather than studying for it! Luckily, my first time taking it was successful, and I was able to retire my MAT study book. I have never been a “good” standardized test taker, so I was excited about “passing” on the first try.

During my interview for the EdD program, my stomach began to sink. Could I really do this? With no background in education, I found myself apprehensive. This felt just like my initial doctor’s visit to learn about my diabetes diagnosis nineteen years ago. I was so happy and nervous when I got the e-mail that I had been accepted to the program! My journey was about to begin…again! As I discussed my decision with my family and friends, they were excited for me. In my undergraduate years, I had been known to carry my notes and books everywhere—it was a long four years. As I mentioned going back for a doctoral degree, my family started joking about my excessive study habits. With only one B in my undergraduate program, in English 101, I believe my study strategies worked. I was nervous, but ready to get started.

I’ve Had This Feeling Before!

I can relate the overall feeling of the beginning of my doctoral studies to when I was 13 years old. One weekend I became very ill. I was fatigued, sleeping 16 to 18 hours a day; nauseous; scared; and wasting, with a weight loss of 10 pounds in about three days. As a family, we noticed my symptoms and my mom had a doctor’s appointment scheduled for me on Monday morning. Of course, all emergencies happen on a weekend, and I wasn’t going to go to the emergency room.

On Monday morning, I found myself at the Marshall University Pediatrics office to visit my long time pediatrician, Dr. Evans. At first, it was thought I had mononucleosis. After that test came back negative, the next step was to check a finger stick blood sugar. After this we knew exactly what was wrong. My blood sugar measured off the scale and was higher than 600 mg/dl. A normal blood sugar ranges between 70 to 100 mg/dl. My mind was racing! Could I still go to school? Could I still be a cheerleader? What will my friends think? Will this cause long–term damage? The major question I had was—why me? I could not believe it, and neither could my family. My initial thoughts were fear, hesitation, and apprehension; just to name a few. The more I thought about this diagnosis, it led me to the same feelings as when I was accepted into the EdD program to pursue a degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Fear, hesitation, and apprehension would haunt my brain again.

During my diabetes diagnosis, my family and I were taught how to manage the disease. We went to educators to learn how to check my blood sugar, how to inject insulin, what to eat and when to eat, how to store insulin properly, what to do if we traveled, what to do if I got sick, and so much more. As I lived with diabetes, this huge life change started to get easier. My diabetes diagnosis actually drove my career decision to become a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator. Thank you diabetes! When I began to think of starting this new education journey, my head went back to when I was 13 and had this experience. Diabetes hasn’t stopped me, and neither will this adventure!

Why did I choose this program?

While “shopping” for doctoral programs, I searched for a variety of possibilities. I looked into PhD programs, both face-to-face and online. When looking at Marshall’s Doctor of Education program, I realized I would be taking my education in a different direction. With no formal knowledge in education, I hesitantly applied for this program. My initial thoughts were— I’m a dietitian, I know nothing about education…can I do this? I had the content knowledge in dietetics to educate students; however, I had no formal training in education at this time. While I spent a few weeks looking into this program, I decided the flexible, but structured schedule was right for me.

I decided in order to learn more about education, the area I was currently working in, I needed to immerse myself in this experience. This is exactly what I did. During my courses, I learned more about the real world setting of education by talking with my fellow classmates who were educators in a variety of locations. This has been one of the most beneficial parts of the program for me.

My Initial Experience

To begin my journey, I enrolled in LS 703 - Research Design with Dr. Childress and LS 719 - Introduction to Doctoral Studies with Dr. Campbell. Both of these courses were a great start to my doctoral career. I must admit I was very nervous and scared to begin coursework. In LS 719, I learned the basics of the doctoral program including how to navigate the website, the importance of a program of study, and more detail about this portfolio essay. I was also able to develop my program of study, which made me feel more comfortable in having a long-term plan.

I am happy to say Research Design was also a great learning experience for me, and I was able to gain confidence in myself. I am much more assured in writing with APA style, and I can safely say I am able to write reference lists without referring to the APA manual every time. This continued to get stronger as I progressed in the program, especially in CI 702 - Curriculum Theories. The confidence I gained from my first semester in this program led me to be a very successful student. I was also able to meet many wonderful faculty and fellow classmates during this first semester; these relationships will be long-lasting.

Also during my first semester, I was tasked with selecting a doctoral committee, which really began during my first Doctoral Seminar in fall of 2016. At first, I was scared, nervous, and anxious. Many thoughts were spinning through my head. Who do I ask? What if they say no? What if I make the wrong decision? At this point, I only knew two of the faculty members personally. Speaking with other students at the Doctoral Seminar and learning more about other faculty members, I was able to narrow down my thoughts. I found that this was a challenging process; however, my decision landed quickly with Dr. Campbell as my chair. With my interest in dietetics, my external committee member was selected from the dietetics faculty, Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould. The final committee member took more consideration. I have an interest in qualitative research and technology. So, in order to learn more, I chose Dr. Lisa Heaton.

While meeting with Dr. Campbell in the spring semester of 2017, we finalized my committee to include the above professionals, along with Dr. Kimberly McFall. Now that my committee was selected and approved, it was time to begin thinking about my research interests for a dissertation. Dr. Campbell set my focus on a research method I had never heard of before, visual methodology. My go-getter personality then purchased *Visual Methodologies* by Gillian Rose, that was recommended by Dr. Campbell, and I began researching.

Dr. Campbell and I spent time talking about my interests and my future plans while thinking about the right direction for a dissertation. Of course, that topic led us straight to diabetes. While discussing my current diabetes education and interests, we identified students who attend Camp Kno-Koma, the Diabetes Camp of West Virginia, to be possible research participants. After our meeting, I was excited about this research area and the thought process for my dissertation. Of course, I did what any student would do and began looking for research at diabetes camps. I could not believe I was actually going to write a dissertation—and I still can’t!

Getting Comfortable with the Program (AKA: My EdD Diagnosis)

As I progressed in the program, my thoughts and feelings began to change. When I first started instructing in higher education, I focused on what to teach. My central thought was I know what to teach, but how? During my second year of teaching, I focused on how to better teach material to students; this is when I began my doctoral program. I also began thinking of how I could incorporate teaching strategies I was learning into the courses I teach. This started as I introduced the flipped classroom model into my graduate and undergraduate courses.

During my summer semester in 2017, I realized this program did not have to control my life, as I let it do most of my first year. I work very hard to learn and get good grades; however, I realized I need to take time for myself so burn out does not occur. I also learned it is ok to get a “B” on one assignment…and I will live! Fortunately, I did not end up with one “B” during that semester.

Further, I was surprised about how much I enjoyed CI 702 - Curriculum Theories. Dr. Campbell tasked the class with weekly readings and completing summaries on topics that resonated the most, or least, with us. This was then used to drive our in-class and online discussions. I learned more from talking with my classmates in this course about curriculum theory than from reading or researching any of the different articles and texts. In this course, we were also tasked with researching and completing annotations on articles related to curriculum theory. I found this to be very helpful when identifying information to guide me to my personal theory ([**Artifact XIV** - Personal Theory of Curriculum](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pNm48-9xyESecw72tRXeX-oAyITBVRpe/view)). I found the presentations related to our personal theory to be very informative. I am a practical person and need to see how ideas and curriculum can be used in the classroom setting and this was a great way to do that.

As the program journeyed onward, I did as well. The more information I learned through my doctoral classes led me to a more comfortable feeling in my career. This program has helped me better understand the world of education and how I fit in. As I progressed in coursework, I really began to see how this information worked together. This was an “ah ha” moment for me. As coursework continued, I began to feel more comfortable with using the knowledge I had been working so hard to gain.

Assessment of Learning: Nothing to Confidence

In this document, I will reflect on my doctoral experience, classroom assignments, collaborative and scholarship opportunities, lessons learned, and challenges faced. Throughout this journey, I will reference artifacts that I collected over the past three years. A comprehensive list of these artifacts is in the appendix. The links for downloading these artifacts can be found on my [portfolio website](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio).

Lessons in Curriculum & Instruction

Collaboration

To me, collaboration is working together toward a common goal. This can be completed in many different venues including coursework, community service, and research. A formal definition from Merriam-Webster (2017) states, “to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor.” I was able to collaborate in many areas of the doctoral program as noted below.

Through my independent study courses in the dietetics department, I was able to collaborate with my colleagues to develop a curriculum for our dietetic internship preceptors (**Artifact I** - Preceptor Handbook). This allowed me to bring dietetics and education together, which is one of my personal goals for this program. I was also able to collaborate with local dietetic preceptors and our dietetic interns while planning and organizing the filming of preceptor education videos. Marshall University Communications also helped in filming and editing the videos. This class allowed for multiple venues of collaboration in the dietetics and Marshall community ([**Artifact XII** - Preceptor Education Video Development](http://www.marshall.edu/dietetics/preceptor-resources/)).

In addition to this preceptor training material, I was able to create a professional development session on mastery learning for dietetic preceptors in CI 703 - Theories, Models, and Research of Teaching. Preceptors are not teachers, and education on different learning and teaching styles is needed (Barker & Pittman, 2008; Taylor, Hasseberg, Anderson, & Knehans, 2010). Preceptors need to understand how to adapt teaching based on individual needs of the student (Barker & Pitmann, 2008). It was only appropriate for me to use the assignment in the CI 703 course to help our preceptors understand teaching models they can use with students ([**Artifact XVIII -** Professional Development Plan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/16FVCYsWP02eOE-duRcaqwtdKRqj1icXa/view))**.**

During my second area of emphasis course in dietetics assessment development, I was able to continue collaborating with fellow dietetics faculty members to update our learning assessment matrix required for program accreditation ([**Artifact II** - Learning Assessment Matrix](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDdFpBa1NaQXA4QlU/view)). In my final area of emphasis course, Curriculum Development in Professional Programs Independent Study, I was able to develop an independent study course with Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould and Dr. Beth Campbell for our students from the ground up. This involved collaboration with the dietetics faculty for syllabus development, student learning outcome development, and assignment development and assessment ([**Artifact XVII -** Food Allergies and Intolerances Graduate Course Development](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRmZ5S2dFZTVfVkk/view)).

In spring 2017, EDF 517 - Statistical Methods also provided an avenue for collaboration. I was able to collaborate with students from other focus areas and majors to complete a research article presentation. Together, we were able to agree on a quantitative research article and presented a successful PowerPoint presentation to our fellow classmates ([**Artifact III** - Research Article Group Presentation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbVA0ZFJkTjB2YlE/view)). Working across disciplines can be challenging; however, we were able to join forces for a positive learning experience. Our presentation not only allowed me to work with other doctoral students, it also allowed me to “let go of the reigns” a little more. I have never been comfortable with group work; however, this was a very positive experience that will allow me to be more comfortable in the future.

In addition, CI 704 - Social and Political Determinants of Curriculum allowed for group collaboration through presentations. Reading texts and supplementing with research allowed our group to be creative and present our own personal views of school privatization. While helpful, this collaborative learning environment was more challenging than previous ones for me. In the end, our group worked well together and provided our peers with beneficial information on political and societal issues in education ([**Artifact XXIX** – Social and Political Determinants Group Presentation](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life)).

I was also able to collaborate with other doctoral students when I volunteered to help at the doctoral seminars during all three years of my coursework. This began in fall 2016 where I was able to meet fellow classmates while helping during the seminar. During the fall 2017 semester, I was able to present on a panel at the doctoral seminar on “Presenting at Conferences” ([**Artifact XIII -** Doctoral Seminar Conference Panel Presentation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZ3ktWTRtcF9KaTg/view)). Amy Gannon and I collaborated with the panel and were able to provide advice about presenting at conferences, as well as learning from our other panel members about the portfolio and dissertation processes. During the summer and fall of 2018, I was able to help as a member of the doctoral seminar planning committee.

Another opportunity I could not turn down was when Dr. Campbell began discussing the 2018 Appalachian Studies Conference in CI 702. She invited us to discuss any topics and desires we had about presenting at this conference. During this class discussion, a panel formed with Dr. Campbell as the convener and panel members from our class and the Marshall community. Together, Dr. Beth Campbell, Kim White, Amy Gannon, Amy Saunders, and I proposed a panel on Marshall University outreach into the community. From the dietetics department, our move off campus to a downtown setting, where we are more integrated in the community, was a great topic for discussion. We were accepted to present at the 2018 Appalachian Studies Conference ([**Artifact XXI** - Appalachian Studies Conference Panel Presentation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CvygwWyCV07NM95qHnFDrXU8TysAV0ji/view) 2018). This was a great opportunity for my first oral presentation at a conference as I was able to collaborate and present with others. This provided more comfort to me than presenting on my own; however, I am looking forward to doing this soon.

Two thousand and nineteen has been a busy year for planning and presenting. Together, Amy Gannon and I were accepted to present at the 2019 Appalachian Studies Conference. The oral presentation panel included four speakers on topics regarding teaching adults and learning from them. We presented *Innovations in Dietetics Education: Engaging Community Members and Meeting the Needs of Tomorrow’s Practitioners in Appalachia* ([**Artifact XXVII** - Appalachian Studies Conference Panel Presentation](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life) 2019). In addition, I gave an oral presentation at the 2019 West Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Conference with two graduate students in dietetics. Our oral presentation titled *Type One Diabetes (T1D) Resources in West Virginia*, provided dietitians basic information on type one diabetes and resources for their patients ([**Artifact XXVIII** - West Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Oral Presentation](https://sites.google.com/s/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbENLZlhwTGxPdEE/p/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZFM1TlVTOFVpNlk/edit) 2019). The proposal of this session encouraged conference leaders to involve students in presentations, which they have enjoyed and want to consider again in the future. My last presentation for 2019 will be at the Society of Nutrition and Education Behavior National Conference in July, with more details to follow in this paper.

Community Service

One of my responsibilities in higher education includes teaching dietetics students the importance of community service. This helps them to be selected for dietetic internships and graduate schools. In fall 2016, I was able to revise my Introduction to Nutrition course (DTS 201) to incorporate service learning at two local organizations that focus on nutrition and healthy eating ([**Artifact VIII** - Course Syllabi](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDb0xXa3oxS25IS2s/view)). This course not only allowed for collaboration within the Huntington community, but also led me to develop and administer surveys to gather research on this experience for students. Today, we still have strong relationships with these community partners, even though our service learning has changed to provide a focus on mentorship opportunities for dietetics students.

In my professional career, I have had the opportunity to volunteer with many organizations that are close to my heart. These organizations include JDRF WV Branch; Camp Kno-Koma (the Diabetes Camp of WV), where I have been the camp RD and board member for four years; and the West Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (WVAND), where I have been a board member for five years and have held the roles of state affiliate delegate and chair of the awards and scholarship committee. With these experiences, I have been able to grow professionally and give back to those who have supported me the most in my life. It is my goal to instill these traits in my students.

Scholarship

**Course Development & Implementation.** I have been able to update and develop many courses on my own as a faculty member in dietetics. I was able to develop and begin teaching DTS 672: Diabetes and Nutrition Management for our graduate students. I developed this course from the ground up and am able to provide essential information about diabetes for future dietetic and other healthcare professionals. I have received great feedback from this course; it is adequately preparing students to work with patients living with diabetes. I have also been able to develop an independent study course on food allergies and intolerances with Dr. Mary Kathryn Gould ([**Artifact XVII -** Food Allergies and Intolerances Graduate Course Development)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRmZ5S2dFZTVfVkk/view). Before this course, students did not receive much information on food allergies and intolerances and proper management of these conditions. Students have provided feedback that this course has really helped them to understand these problems and how they will be able to help their patients and clients manage food allergies and intolerances in the future.

In CI 705 – Higher Education Curriculum, I was able to collaborate with other students in the program who work in higher education. This was a particularly useful class for me to focus directly on the environment where I teach. Through journal analyses, poster development, conference panel presentation submissions, and online course development, I feel like this course was one of the most beneficial to me in the program. In the dietetics department, we have had many discussions about transitioning some of our courses to the online environment. With the flexibility of this class, I was able to transition our DTS 210: Nutrition course online by working with the Marshall University online course development team ([**Artifact XXV** - Online Course Development DTS 210: Nutrition](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bb6A7Nr7HRpEXq9I9OCjkZ_vdB4HSt8M/view)). I was able to complete the required steps to begin teaching this course in fall 2019. In the future, I look forward to transitioning a graduate independent study course to the online environment. This, and future endeavors, are beneficial for our department to reach more students and offer different options for our current students.

In addition to new course development, I have had the opportunity, with the help of this program, to revise my current dietetics courses. My DTS 201: Introductory Nutrition course was awarded service-learning designation through the University. I have also had the opportunity to transition DTS 670: Advanced Medical Nutrition Therapy I and DTS 670: Advanced Medical Nutrition Therapy II into virtual courses ([**Artifact VIII** - Course Syllabi](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hMnh1skdBsEIwTKNAyegh2ClN9bnP1st/view)). These courses include face-to-face and online students in our on-site and distance dietetic internships. Throughout CI 627 - Program Planning and Evaluation, I was able to develop a logic model to help with the planning and evaluation of this distance internship ([**Artifact IV** - Logic Model](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDT0lJWm9Ldkt5azA/view)). I was also able to learn how to best formatively and summatively evaluate portions of our dietetics department.

In addition, I have also been able to incorporate flipped learning methods into my DTS 201: Introductory Nutrition and DTS 210: Nutrition courses ([**Artifact VIII** - Course Syllabi](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDOHlJSVlyT2FRdHc/view)). I am excited to say I have been able to use Kahoot in the classroom and Quizzizz as an at-home study tool. My introductory nutrition students have thoroughly enjoyed using these technology tools, which have also enhanced their education ([**Artifact XXIV -** Pic Monkey Learning Experience](https://www.picmonkey.com/p/tJbzL06zPMr)). Dr. Heaton’s CIEC 700 - Technology and Curriculum course really helped me to identify where I can appropriately use technology with my students. Recently, I have replaced Kahoot with Top Hat, a program geared toward higher education students to provide polling and discussion questions throughout lectures. Through the technology experience in Dr. Heaton’s course, I knew this program was worth trying.

**Poster Presentations.** During the first year of my doctoral course work, I was able to work with a fellow EdD student and colleague, Amy Gannon, to complete a process evaluation of our Nutrition Education Program in the Dietetics Department. We completed our poster and presented it at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) national meeting hosted by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in 2016. This opportunity gave me the understanding of how to present at a conference. For this conference, an abstract was submitted. I was able to assist in completing my first poster presentation, which I felt was fairly easy to create. Data collection and writing were the hardest parts of the process.

During the poster presentation, we had many healthcare professionals including registered dietitians, pediatricians, and dietetic technicians stop by for discussion. The topic of our poster was *Use of Technology in a Youth Nutrition Education Program Improves Efficiency of the Evaluation and Leads to Improved Staff Satisfaction* ([**Artifact V** - Poster Presentation 2016](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDVnBveFprNlFFdUU/view)). I have now learned how to submit an abstract, develop a poster presentation in PowerPoint, the importance and steps of proofreading the poster, transferring graphs from Microsoft Word to PowerPoint, and the importance of preparation for presenting the poster.

During the summer of 2017, Amy and I were able to complete another process evaluation where we surveyed our educators and interns about a new gardening lesson that was integrated into the Nutrition Education Program Curriculum. These opportunities are leading our department to complete more research on impact. A poster was developed and was accepted for presentation at the Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior Annual Conference in 2019 ([**Artifact XXVI -** Poster Presentation 2019](https://sites.google.com/s/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbENLZlhwTGxPdEE/p/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRGlZdGhBVFRzWlk/edit)).

With the information presented at the 2018 Appalachian Studies conference, Amy Gannon and I decided to compile a poster presentation, *Dietetics Meets Downtown: An Educational Case Study*, to share this information with our dietetics colleagues. This poster, our second collaborative poster, was accepted and presented at the 2018 Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo on October 23 in Washington, DC ([**Artifact XIX -** Poster Presentation 2018](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18jb-tI53Fz_tKwvc3f3Vo6jNYuQT8hUz/view)).

**Writing for Publication.** For CI 677 - Writing for Publication, I was able to research and write about universities moving off campus and how the Marshall University Department of Dietetics’ move to downtown Huntington has shown current and future benefits in education ([**Artifact XX -** Writing for Publication Practice Piece](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZu09Qm-OV4SjVYZNZg6SVu3LkL7LJfE/view)).I was able to build on the information I learned when developing the presentation for the Appalachian Studies Conference for this practice piece. The focus of this piece was to follow-up on an article previously published in *NDEP-Line* by Amy Gannon, MS, RD, LD, my colleague and fellow doctoral student. She introduced nutrition educators to the Marshall University Department of Dietetics move to our downtown Huntington location. My article expanded on how this move has impacted our students, department, and the Huntington community, as well as our future plans. To my surprise, this article was published in the summer 2018 *NDEP-Line* publication. This was one of the best learning experiences I have had in this program. This writing course provided many opportunities to collaborate with my fellow students through writing workshops, which made each of us a stronger writer.

It is my hope I can use my experience and knowledge gained from EDF 635 - Policy Studies in Education to publish occasional opinion-editorials on important issues on nutrition education in medical schools, the importance of nutrition education in our public school systems, and the importance of diabetes prevention and childhood obesity ([**Artifact XXII -**Opinion-Editorial Essay](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xJP8OQc2JM74bNVhJEZnZTNq9XoRt0v4/view)). In addition to nutrition education, I am looking forward to how I can get more involved in educational policy at the higher education level.

Research

**The Flipped Classroom.** I spent the majority of my first semester coursework composing a research proposal. I felt very honored when Dr. Childress asked if he could use my topic, research purpose, research problems, and research questions as an example in his Research Design class ([**Artifact VI** - Research Proposal Topic and Questions](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZVktV0dFcmhzeTQ/view)). I was able to combine my passion for dietetics and education to complete my proposal titled, *Student and Teacher Perceptions Using Flipped Classroom Models in Dietetics Education* ([**Artifact VII** - Research Proposal](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDa29HaDk4MHBoSVU/view)). I feel more confident after completing this proposal and look forward to being able to implement this research one day. I worked most of the semester on this proposal and ended up having five revisions; not including the multiple revisions I had on the topic, research purpose, and questions. I realize to become a great writer, revision is needed and was stressed by Dr. Childress. My biggest challenge with this project was developing appropriate research questions, which I understand is a challenge in most research studies.

Through the coursework in LS 703, I was able to research the flipped classroom model and have since been able to revise my undergraduate courses to include this teaching method. These courses were revised in spring 2016 and began in fall 2017 ([**Artifact VIII** - Course Syllabi](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDOHlJSVlyT2FRdHc/view)). Without the research proposal in this course, I would not be aware of the flipped classroom model; let alone be able to incorporate it into my courses.

During the fall of 2017, CIEC 700 - Technology and Curriculum allowed me to continue researching my new passion—the flipped classroom. I was able to build on my current knowledge and research on how technology can be used in the flipped classroom ([**Artifact XV -** Technology Integration in Flipped Classrooms Research Paper](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u0sIUlBu-WWbldQJs4nBKvWqVGzxtned/view); [**Artifact XVI** - Technology Integration in Flipped Classrooms Video Presentation](https://www.dropbox.com/s/v3oqkfbln4cd9bt/VideoPresentationMMount.MOV?dl=0)). In CI 704 - Social and Political Determinants of Curriculum, I was able to complete IRB approved research with students taking DTS 210: Nutrition in a flipped classroom format. Through this, I was able to investigate the impact of the flipped classroom on student perceptions of learning, flexibility in coursework, course experience, and ideas for learning. With the help of my coursework, LS 703 - Research Design, CI 702 - Curriculum Theory, CIEC 700 - Technology and Curriculum, and CI 704 - Social and Political Determinants of Curriculum, I was able to put curriculum theory and flipped classroom information together. This was very beneficial for me.

**Additional Research Experience.** Along with the research proposal completed in LS 703, I was given the opportunity to select a dissertation to read and complete an analysis ([**Artifact IX** - Dissertation Analysis](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDLWVTT200TjJpZlk/view)). I now feel confident searching for and reading dissertations. I am also able to better understand what is needed to complete a dissertation and different analysis and coding processes that can be used. I also found I really enjoy qualitative research. I feel this is one of the most beneficial assignments I completed in this course.

In the summer of 2017, I was able to enroll in LS 711 - Survey Research in Education. This course helped me to enhance my survey writing ability ([**Artifact X -** Self Administered Survey Development](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDclhvQXlVNEFhSHM/view); [**Artifact XI** - Final Assessment](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDODZlVC1xc01VazA/view)). This course and CI 627 - Program Planning and Evaluation have been essential learning courses for me. These educational courses have prepared me to submit posters and oral panel presentations as mentioned above. In addition, I have completed surveys and process evaluations for the Marshall University Nutrition Education Program.

**Qualitative Research—My Personal Research Focus.** I knew I was interested in qualitative research; however, it wasn’t until I began the EDF 625 course in Qualitative Research in Education that I was really able to understand the importance, and my passion, for qualitative research. When I began thinking about future research, I want to learn more about people—and this was the best way to do that. I am excited to learn more about collaborative research and how it can change everyone who is involved. During this course, I was able to dig in to collecting qualitative data through observations and interviews, while understanding how to record them by transcriptions and logs ([**Artifact XXIII** - Interview Log and Transcription](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xd0UU5dhEqT3H8HqqxDQw_TJFUm4qpfE/view)). In addition, I was able to learn important research terms that were once foreign—epistemology, hermeneutics, ontology, and empiricism.

In the summer of 2018, I was able to begin collecting some research at Camp Kno-Koma, the Diabetes Camp of WV. This research, *Experiential Learning in Dietetics: Can Diabetes Camp Make a Difference?*, began in regards to my interest for my dissertation. This IRB approved study helped me to use my framework for my dissertation. This was a great experience for me as I saw exactly how qualitative research works. I am excited to continue with this research to gather more information on experiential learning for my dissertation.

To finish my coursework in qualitative research, I enrolled in EDF 725 - Advanced Qualitative Research. In this course, I was able to focus on organizing, interpreting, indexing, and summarizing a large quantity of qualitative data ([**Artifact XXX** - Index & Summary](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life?authuser=0)). While I found this course challenging, I feel as if I have the knowledge needed to complete a successful qualitative dissertation.

Personal Theory on Curriculum and Instruction

When I began teaching dietetics in higher education, I had a small amount of time to prepare. I was hired a few days before classes began and to say I was overwhelmed cannot explain my thoughts and feelings. During my first year teaching, I was able to survive. I had strong content knowledge, but my educational knowledge was minute. I spent this year getting my feet wet and teaching how I had always been taught—by lecture. I continued to update my lectures with updated content knowledge, but I did not start thinking about how I was teaching until I began this doctoral program.

It was in my very first course, LS 703 Research Design, where I really grasped my understanding as an educator. Constructivism and the flipped classroom teaching method continued to show up in each course. When deciding on my personal theories of curriculum and teaching, I kept focusing on constructivism, especially social constructivism, and learner-centered strategies. Through learning and understanding pedagogy, I am able recognize the theoretical concept behind what and how I teach and how it relates to my personal model of teaching.

Constructivism is known as “one of the greatest influences on the practice of education in the last 25 years” (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) and is becoming a central concept in education (Biggs, 1996). Constructivism is an active learning process where learners construct new ideas using their past experiences. This learning process also helps students to restructure their current knowledge for better understanding (Biggs, 1996; Saini, 2015; Windschitl, 2011). Restructuring results in accommodation and assimilation of knowledge (Brandon & All, 2010). By working in groups, students can consider other opinions and knowledge of other students (Windschitl, 2011). In all educational programs, the goal is to promote lifelong learners. Included in this theory is active, student-centered learning in which learners construct new ideas based upon what they already know (Brandon & All, 2010; Saini, 2015; Windschitl, 2011). Assessment and evaluation are continual and constant (Saini, 2015). An idea from Biggs (1996) that really resonated with me is constructivism is considered qualitative learning, not quantitative, which aligns with my research interests.

Work on this theory has been influenced by Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky, Hegel, Kant, Vico, Bruner, Gardner, Neisser, Chomsky, and Goodman (Berding, 2010; Brandon & All, 2010; Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Piaget focused on the “contraindication and equilibration in learning” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005) and that students need to compare the ideas of others to their own (Windschitl, 2011). Vygotsky’s major focus was on dialogue (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). The zone of proximal development, by Vygotsky, is noted as the intellectual potential of a child when helped by their educator (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). John Dewey theorized students learn through constant construction of knowledge grounded in real life experience (Saini, 2015). Windschitl (2011) also noted Dewey encouraged students to gather information to solve problems, be responsible for solving problems, and test their ideas. Dewey also identified learning through occupation could influence our society (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). Constructivism is considered practical, interactive, and improves critical thinking, where students take ownership of learning (Brandon & All, 2010: Saini, 2015; Terhart, 2003). All of which I am determined for my students to experience.

I knew the flipped classroom method was the way for my students to experience constructivism in my courses. The flipped classroom teaching method has also been majorly influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky. When I think about education—my focus goes toward learning for individual growth and workforce training. It would be unfair for me to say I do not believe in workforce training with the field I teach.

In the classroom, I am very learner-focused; however, I do spend a great deal of time on direct instruction, which makes my theory more personal. Since I first began teaching, I have been able to incorporate many different activities to help my students develop concepts and ideas for their own learning and have recently flipped some of my classes to help with this. I have also integrated technology my students have loved and engaged them to become more active in class. In addition, hands-on, active learning through service-learning has been incorporated in one of my courses. So far, students have loved the opportunity to engage in their own experiences and learning. I also encourage students to ask questions. Since I have been able to integrate more active learning experiences into my classroom, I have seen an increase in questions and interaction. While doing what works is comfortable for me, I have learned change can be even more beneficial. I believe students can generate knowledge and learn from others in an interactive, educational setting. I not only find constructivism in my higher education classroom, but also when volunteering at Camp Kno-Koma, the Diabetes Camp of WV. This theory is the basis of education for managing type one diabetes. As with everything, I plan to continue adjusting my teaching strategies for students and patients as they arise.

Personal Teaching Model

In CI 703 – Theories, Models, and Research of Teaching, I identified that I use teaching strategies from the social family of models the most; however, I noted I use approaches from each of the other families also. One benefit noted in the social family is that teachers are able to create a positive learning environment and engage their students when using cooperative learning strategies (Sharan & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1982). With all of these models, the teacher can be flexible in their timing for preparation and teaching the lesson; however, teachers must have a high level of interpersonal and instructional skills to be effective (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2015). These models work well with my personal theory on curriculum, constructivism.

In the social family of models, students work in pairs and larger groups. They work cooperatively and actively with other students. By learning together, students create synergy and begin building communities (Ji-Ping & Collis, 1995). All of the models in this family can be used across the curriculum and adapted for student goals. In this family, students encounter a situation and work with other students to develop, discuss, and analyze solutions. Teachers should guide, facilitate, intervene, and supervise these models (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2015).

I had a much easier time understanding the models in this family since I use partnered learning and role playing in my courses. I believe in my area of practice, it is essential that health care professionals practice these social teaching models, because the majority of their career will include talking to patients and clients to determine problems and changes that can be made to affect their quality of life.

In addition to social interactions, I use inquiry training, explicit instruction, mastery learning, and direct instruction. I am not able to fully choose one preferred model of instruction, as I know both educators and learners need a variety of environments to challenge themselves and stimulate development. I mainly prefer constructive learning environments, as I believe I can use scaffolding, creativity, and collaboration, as well as many other learning and teaching strategies. I enjoy watching and facilitating students to allow for a learning environment with maximum input and participation.

Area of Emphasis

My initial idea regarding my area of emphasis was dietetics education in higher education. I will be working in this area after completing this degree, so I thought this was appropriate. I am very new to the area of dietetics education and accreditation and thought digging into this area of information would best suit my needs. In discussions with Dr. Campbell, she also thought this was an appropriate route to take. During these discussions, I also decided I should focus on technology and the development of online courses. This will be extremely important in the future of education and was beneficial in the development and revision of our distance dietetic internship and undergraduate courses. It has been helpful to use strategies learned in my doctoral courses in my daily work. Without this opportunity, my higher education courses would look much different. I have enjoyed being able to use the information I have learned over the past three years in many different areas, as I have noted above. Thank you for allowing me to relate this important information into my dietetics career.

I am also grateful to have such supportive faculty and colleagues to help me along this journey. One of our dietetics faculty members completed her EdD in Educational Leadership and another is completing her EdD in Curriculum and Instruction, all at Marshall University. It has been such a blessing to have these women by my side during this journey. Also, I cannot say enough about Dr. Childress and Dr. Campbell and how they really influenced me during this program. While having them for the majority of my classes, I have been able to use them as mentors for research and writing. This could not have been a more enjoyable experience for me.

Reflection on the Rubric

This qualifying assessment document is meant to reflect on my experiences as a doctoral student and provide evidence that I am ready for the next steps of this education process. To help with this, I would like to reflect on the doctoral program rubric, which includes collaboration, depth of understanding, reflection, scholarship, communication, and research. Collaboration, scholarship, and research have been stated above, so now the focus will be on the remaining components.

This paper describes the depth of understanding I have gained over the last three years. I have identified during my tenure in the doctoral program that I am a reflector. I constantly reflect on my teaching strategies and what needs changed, my progress in the doctoral program, and also in my everyday life. As I reflect on this journey, I feel happy, which is much different than the fear and hesitation I felt when I first began. I also feel confident and successful. As I reflect on my coursework during this program, I am satisfied with my progress and am happy to be making the next step in this journey. Throughout this paper, I have described what I have learned and the confidence I have gained. Not only have I developed better written and oral communication skills from my coursework; I also feel I have developed content knowledge in education and am able to explain this to others. In addition, my technology communication skills have been enhanced through this program. This reflective paper, qualifying assessment presentation, and portfolio website show how my communication skills have and will continue to develop.

Next Steps

Of course, the goal of this qualifying assessment is to move forward to complete my prospectus and dissertation. At this time, I plan to complete my dissertation using Photovoice, a qualitative research method for community-based participatory research (Rose, 2012). To do this, I will identify the knowledge and perceptions gained by dietetics students during experiential learning at a residential diabetes camp, Camp Kno-Koma, the Diabetes Camp of West Virginia. Students will document their education through photos taken on disposable cameras. Interviews before their learning experience, observations during camp, and focus groups following their learning experience will be used for data collection. I was able to complete this portion of the research during the summer of 2018 in EDF 625 - Qualitative Research in Education. It is my desire to continue with this research and interview all four of the dietetics students who took part in this research one year after their experience. This will allow me as the researcher to identify the long-term benefits of experiential learning for dietetics students and how it has helped them in their coursework or careers. The aim of this dissertation will be to improve dietetic student education, perceptions of diabetes, and increase confidence and empathy in caring for patients with type one diabetes. In addition, this study will add to the body of knowledge concerning experiential learning in multi-discipline health professional students.

Ready for the Challenge Ahead

I am so proud of the accomplishments I have already completed during this program. Not only has this been professional growth, but I have also grown personally. I have successfully collaborated with many different professionals, students, and faculty members during this program in coursework, research, and scholarly activities. I have been able to fully integrate my learning into my daily practice of teaching in higher education. I am confident my experience over the last three years has successfully prepared me to enter the dissertation process. I am excited to complete research I am passionate about. Throughout this EdD diagnosis, I have been able to circle back to my very first life changing diagnosis of type one diabetes and how it prepared me for my educational journey in this program.

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Appendix 1: Portfolio Artifacts

My artifacts can be located on my [portfolio website](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio).

1. [**Artifact I** - Preceptor Handbook](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDUm40cmdvVEF0RkE/view)
2. [**Artifact II** - Learning Assessment Matrix](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDdFpBa1NaQXA4QlU/view)
3. [**Artifact III** - Research Article Group Presentation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbVA0ZFJkTjB2YlE/view)
4. [**Artifact IV** - Logic Model](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDT0lJWm9Ldkt5azA/view)
5. [**Artifact V** - Poster Presentation 2016](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDVnBveFprNlFFdUU/view)
6. [**Artifact VI** - Research Proposal Topic and Questions](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZVktV0dFcmhzeTQ/view)
7. [**Artifact VII** - Research Proposal](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDa29HaDk4MHBoSVU/view)
8. [**Artifact VIII** - Course Syllabi](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDb0xXa3oxS25IS2s/view)
9. [**Artifact IX** - Dissertation Analysis](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDLWVTT200TjJpZlk/view)
10. [**Artifact X** - Self Administered Survey Development](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDclhvQXlVNEFhSHM/view)
11. [**Artifact XI** - Final Assessment EDF 711](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDODZlVC1xc01VazA/view)
12. [**Artifact XII** - Preceptor Education Video Development](http://www.marshall.edu/dietetics/preceptor-resources/)
13. [**Artifact XIII** - Doctoral Seminar Conference Panel Presentation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZ3ktWTRtcF9KaTg/view)
14. [**Artifact XIV** - Personal Theory of Curriculum](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pNm48-9xyESecw72tRXeX-oAyITBVRpe/view)
15. [**Artifact XV** - Technology Integration in Flipped Classrooms Research Paper](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u0sIUlBu-WWbldQJs4nBKvWqVGzxtned/view)
16. [**Artifact XVI -** Technology Integration in Flipped Classrooms Video Presentation](https://www.dropbox.com/s/v3oqkfbln4cd9bt/VideoPresentationMMount.MOV?dl=0)
17. [**Artifact XVII -** Food Allergies and Intolerances Graduate Course Development](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRmZ5S2dFZTVfVkk/view)
18. [**Artifact XVIII** - Professional Development Plan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/16FVCYsWP02eOE-duRcaqwtdKRqj1icXa/view)
19. [**Artifact XIX –** Poster Presentation 2018](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18jb-tI53Fz_tKwvc3f3Vo6jNYuQT8hUz/view)
20. [**Artifact XX –** Writing for Publication Practice Piece](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZu09Qm-OV4SjVYZNZg6SVu3LkL7LJfE/view)
21. **Artifact XXI –** Appalachian Studies Conference Panel Presentation 2018
22. [**Artifact XXII –** Opinion-Editorial Essay](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xJP8OQc2JM74bNVhJEZnZTNq9XoRt0v4/view)
23. [**Artifact XXIII –** Interview Log and Transcription](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xd0UU5dhEqT3H8HqqxDQw_TJFUm4qpfE/view)
24. [**Artifact XXIV –** Pic Monkey Learning Experience](https://www.picmonkey.com/p/tJbzL06zPMr)
25. [**Artifact XXV –** Online Course Development DTS 210: Nutrition](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bb6A7Nr7HRpEXq9I9OCjkZ_vdB4HSt8M/view)
26. **[Artifact XXVI](https://sites.google.com/s/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbENLZlhwTGxPdEE/p/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRGlZdGhBVFRzWlk/edit)** [– Poster Presentation 2019](https://sites.google.com/s/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbENLZlhwTGxPdEE/p/0B9AuGtmbT_uDRGlZdGhBVFRzWlk/edit)
27. [**Artifact XXVII** – Appalachian Studies Conference Panel Presentation](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life) 2019
28. [**Artifact XXVIII**– West Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Oral Presentation](https://sites.google.com/s/0B9AuGtmbT_uDbENLZlhwTGxPdEE/p/0B9AuGtmbT_uDZFM1TlVTOFVpNlk/edit) 2019
29. [**Artifact XXIX** - Societal and Political Determinants Group Presentation](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life)
30. [**Artifact XXX** - Index & Summary](https://sites.google.com/view/mmountdoctoralportfolio/diagnosis-ed-d/getting-comfortable-with-my-new-life?authuser=0)