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2007 46th Biennial Convocation

Reflection

The 46th Kapa Delta Pi Biennial Convocation was a defining experience in how I see myself as a future educator. I did not know that such camaraderie existed between teachers across the nation and such a willingness to serve one another by sharing accumulated experiences and knowledge.

From my experiences through taking education courses at Mineral Area College and now SEMO, questions have risen about teaching - burning little questions about how I am going to do this, how am I going to teach that better, how can I impact students lives positively, what do I need to know concerning the endless variations of student needs, how can I do everything perfectly without making and mistakes what-so-ever all the time, etc. I was thrilled to see all my questions, except for the last, addressed in the many specialized workshops offered at the Convocation.

The Convo successfully offered to future educators the opportunity to experience the objectives of its theme, Commitment, Connectedness, and Competency. I was blown away by the caliber of expertise held by the majority of the educators who presented in the workshop and general sessions. The information that I was exposed to during the Convo made me aware that there is accurate research and resources on nearly anything that I may come up against, right at my fingertips. I was excited that I now had resources from which to glean and share with other educators.

As an Art Education major, I had specific interest in learning how to handle diversity of language and culture in my classroom, how to encourage other educators to

recognize the extra avenues which Art can bring to enhance student learning in other subject matters –also enhancing other areas of student life, and tips and resources that will prepare me for my first year of teaching. I was continually impressed by how completely my interests were met. Those who funded and organized the Convo, and helped us who went, did indeed do us a service.

The greatest of all teachers once encouraged his students to understand that to lead you must serve one another (John 13:12-17). The care with which the speakers were chosen and the determination it must have taken to organize such a large scale operation (at a Marriott no less) humbled me and made me feel supported and a part of something larger. Furthermore, it was refreshing to hear the banquet open with a word of prayer. It made me feel that others had a sense that they were and are a part of something larger still; that the importance and purposes of our roles as educators are and have been connected to and instituted by a hand of providence greater than our own intentions.

All of this was something that I had not recognized as a prospective teacher at such level before. I have heard of the camaraderie between educators and the commitment that we all share to better one another for the sake of bettering our students, yet it had mostly seemed a distant novelty until I saw what was all being done for me, my fellow educators, and current educators who attended. We had the opportunity to see how the focus of the national education system is changing.

The atmosphere created by the presenters at the general sessions made me feel that the thinking and direction of the national education system was shifting towards how to promote the relationship between students and teachers and how relationship impacts the learning and lives of students. I feel, from what was being said over the microphone, that we are on the cuff of a great turn in the thinking and practice of education. The

education system is stepping up to the special needs of an increasingly diverse and technologically enhanced generation and we, on the level of national legislature, are seeing the importance and necessity of relationships between students and teachers. I returned to Cape feeling more resolved to dig in and see how the information and resources that I gained can be applied to philosophy and practice of teaching, and for the first time I feel I have a strong enough foundation of knowledge and access to resources to do so.

There is only so much that I can get from education classes. Knowledge from class work is necessary, and I value the insight that I receive from the committed professors who teach them, but I feel the sharing of experience, wisdom, and knowledge through the collaboration of specialized expert educators in such an atmosphere of camaraderie as the Convocation should play a greater role in the educational experience of future educators. I am more thankful now for the service that Kapa Delta Pie offers, and I should recognize that those who attend and are members are the committed of the education field. I hope the importance of the service offered by K.D.P. is more publicized and the principles which it represents, Fidelity to Humanity, Science, Service, and Toil, be more expressed in the University of Education's classrooms. As it was stated in the closing ceremony by a presenter, "we [as educators] are of the most important people in the world." I look forward to seeing myself and those who are studying education become connected and committed to the importance of our roles as educators and unlock our potential to change the lives of our students.

Listing of Workshops and General Sessions I attended:

Thursday

Welcome to America! 10 Essentials for Introducing ELLs to Your Classroom

How to Win Learners and Influence Students

Billy Staples: Teaching outside of the Box

Friday

Integrate the Arts in Grief Support

Surviving Your First Year

Andy Hargreaves: Sustaining Teachers, Sustaining Teaching

Visual Art: Weaving In and Out of a Standards-based Curriculum

Will Richardson: Teaching at the Crossroads: Prof. Practice in a Web 2.0 World

Saturday

General Session: Dr. Hargreaves; Dr. Davis Jr.; Dr. Day; Dr. Egan

Hardwiring a New Language: Schema Building for SLLs

Developing Competence in Using Cooperative Learning and Hands-on Activities for

Mixed Language Ability Students

Dr. Kathy Brown: Learning, Exploring, Interacting, Service: Connections that Matter