

## I Wanted a Degree, Now I Want to be the Leader and Best!

*By Megan Sparks*

While rereading my education goals that I wrote in the fall of 2012, I cringed. My response to the mandatory application question of “Why do you want to be part of this Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program?” is so dry. It has all the appropriate answers of “I want to learn” and “I want to be a better teacher,” but it has no emotion or depth similar to how I currently feel about all the tools I have learned. I used the appropriate terms like “learning to bridge the gap” or meeting the new generation’s technology needs, but there was no passion behind it. I stuck to the generic comment that I would concentrate in Math and Science and Sports Leadership and Coaching, simply because it made sense since those are my certifications. When I applied for the MAED program, I did want to be a better teacher in order to meet Michigan’s teaching certifications requirements and to be looked at in a positive light in the classroom. But I wasn’t excited or as rearing to go as I feel now.

After getting accepted in the program, I started to look more closely at the course offerings and the concentration descriptions in order to develop a program plan. As I reviewed all of the courses, I quickly realized that I had a great desire to take all four of the classes under Sports Leadership and Coaching, not just the three required for the concentrations. I also realized that there were so many other courses I was interested in and the courses in the science and math concentration didn’t grab my attention the same way. That quickly, I nixed my plan to have two concentrations and decided to focus on Sports Leadership and Coaching.

Not all the classes that I chose for my program plan turned out as expected. But of the ones I chose, I am glad to have the new knowledge for each of them. I quickly found myself eager to apply my new knowledge to every aspect of my life. I compare information in both classes I take each semester, used pieces from previous semesters to reference in a new class, dream of developing recreation programs, critically evaluate my daughters’ schools and sports programs, and even give my husband unsolicited ideas of how he should be training his outdoor educators.

I honestly never thought I would go back to school after undergrad. I wasn’t even that eager to go to college in the first place. But now I hear myself eager for each coming semester, jumping ahead on assignments, and suggesting that I might pursue a new certification or degree after I finish this one. I am so eager to use my new knowledge and passion for well-developed classrooms and programs, I can’t wait to get back into sports and recreation to make the biggest impact I can on these young lives waiting

to be molded. This program has helped me truly embrace the motto of my undergrad. And I am now confident that I am set up to be the leader and best.