

The old adage of “you learn something new every day” is so true, especially in the world of education. Even though I am near the end of my graduate program and so close to obtaining my master’s degree, my experiences as both a teacher and a student have taught me that every day presents a new challenge for a new success. As I look back on my post-secondary education there is one key concept that stands out as a useful tool in my teaching and another concept stands out as a hole in my knowledge base.

As a teacher every day is met with new challenges. Any good teacher sees these challenges as an opportunity for improvement. These teachers spend much time trying to come up with ways to make the teaching and learning in their classroom ideal. Once some strategy or plan is made and implemented, how does a teacher know if what they are doing is making a positive difference in their classroom? Action research is the answer to this question and is the most valuable concept from my graduate studies that will help me to grow and learn in the future. Action research is a way for teachers to assess if strategies for change they implement in their classroom are effectively making the difference they desire. The process of action research is fairly simple; it starts with identifying a problem. Next, the teacher considers multiple alternative courses of action and chooses which one(s) to implement. Then, through the process of implementation the teacher collects multiple sets of data to study the consequences of the actions taken. At that time, this data is be used to reflect on whether the actions implemented have indeed provided the desired results. If so, the action research is complete; if not, it starts all over again. It seems as though things are always changing in education and it is important for teachers to have a way to determine if the change they put into practice is solving the problem they have identified. In my graduate program, two of my classes focused on action research. The first one took place in the summer and gave me an opportunity to work through the process theoretically before implementing it in the classroom. The second course was in the fall and allowed be to implement the plan immediately upon creating it. This slow exposure to the process allowed me to fully understand how it worked and see how valuable it will be in learning from my students and being the best teacher I can be. It will be an invaluable tool in continuing to grow as a teacher and learner.

Here, at the end of my graduate program, I still have more to learn. The most evident as a math teacher is the history of mathematics. Students often ask me why or how the math was developed or why we call something what we do. This is one of the few moments where my honest answer is “I don’t know.” Even though many individuals see a master’s degree as the end of their formal post-secondary education, I do not. I hope to take a course on the history of mathematics in the near future. I do face one challenge in this endeavor. I believe taking this course online would not be as effective as taking it in person, but there is no such course offered locally. I hope to find an option that I can take, maybe over the summer, as I feel this background will offer me the ability to answer the why and how questions my students ask.

As I look back on my post-secondary education learning how to conduct action research in my own classroom is one key concept that stands out as a useful tool in my teaching. My knowledge of the history of mathematics on the other hand is a concept stands out as a hole in my knowledge base. Even though I am near the end of my graduate program and so close to obtaining my master’s degree, my experiences as both a teacher and a student have taught me that every day presents a new

challenge for a new success and thus learning is never ending. The old adage of “you learn something new every day” is so true, especially in the world of education.