

13 weeks piddly

Ah, the joys of surviving third year Education, a.k.a. our professional year. Best described as a hazy numbness in which you shuffle through, counting the weeks (or is it days?) until the true terror begins. That's right, the dreaded/anticipated/hoped for practicum where we get to test those wonderful theories we've been memorizing.

Why do we look at these practicum with such awe? Is it because the practical nature of them overwhelms us? Is it possible that we have to prove to ourselves, and to those around us, that we are competent, trained, and willing to act in a professional manner? Why is that concept so frightening?

Perhaps the answers can be found in the way our current program is set up. Out of our entire four years, we spend 13 weeks in a real classroom. 13 weeks! Maybe that seems reasonable, but when you look at how many weeks we spend attaining our Bachelor of Education degree (112), 13 weeks is a pretty piddly amount. Yet during those 13 weeks, we probably learn more about the day to day reality of teaching than from all the textbooks put together. What better way to learn is there than through direct experience, i.e. the "hands on" approach?

It never ceases to amaze me when I hear of the value of discovery learning in my curriculum and instruction courses (among others), because I see

little, if any, evidence of it in the university education system. We are told it is a wonderful teaching method, and yet we ourselves cannot experience it. The broad general concept of this and other methods is given to us, but with few *specific* guidelines to follow. Whatever happened to examples? Are they no longer given for fear of corrupting us into teaching innovatively?

I say we have a right to expect something more practical in our training. Give us more time in the schools, more chances to observe fellow professionals in the field. Their teaching styles, classroom management skills, and strategies are an example to us, and we can learn tremendously from it.

Not only that, but professors should integrate curriculum and instruction courses with specific examples and case studies of what's been happening in the education field. We should know past practices, in order to learn from the mistakes. We should understand present realities, so that we know what to expect when we get out there. Lastly, we should try to improve what we already have, so that future education practices are better than ever. In order to accomplish this, we need to observe and experience as many different classroom climates and situations as possible. After all, teaching is supposed to be *active* and ever evolving, isn't it?

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Hitting the slopes at Big White

by Kisa Mortenson

Over Christmas, I finally did it. I decided to ski Big White with the U of A ski club.

Ski hills were never so real... The conditions were snow, snow, and more snow and there I was, the second time skier, ready to hit the slopes... And I did.

In the beginning, I raced down hills with and without skis and realized something wasn't quite right. I had to examine what I was doing.

For the beginner, I knew the prime objective of skiing was to get down the hill. There were also those minor details like "keep your skis on your feet," "don't drop skis, poles, boots, or mittens, or people off chair lifts," and "stay in one piece."

Skiing with an expert seemed to be the best way to achieve the ski objective and those little details. My ski lesson meant following Flash, the red haired

racing pro, down the hills.

We took the chair without major calamity up to the north side. I kept skis, poles, boots, mittens, and Flash on the chair but now had to face the real objective.

Visibility wasn't great up top but down the hill we went. Pink neon zinca on his face, glowing in the distance, Flash led the way. The green run was simple enough but then came the blue intermediate run...

Flash blazed some tree trails and I followed but only so far. Before me stood a tree, I was ready... Ready for what, you have to ask...

I hit the tree with my face. Hearing a loud crack, I wondered if I had broken my whole body, my skis, or just the tree. I fell backwards and snow fell from the tree, covering my flattened body.

Flash hurried back and planted his ski poles in the path, so crazed skiers didn't run me over mistaking me for a mogul. I sat up slowly and opened my eyes. The tree was doing fine. My body seemed to be all there. It was my chin that hadn't survived the crash.

Blood trickled down my chin and froze as it hit my coat. Flash turned medic and tied his trendy U of A ski club bandana around my face, making me look as though I had caught a bad case of mumps from hitting a tree with my face.

On my skis, I wobbled the rest of the way down the hill to first aid. Antisepted and band aided, I left the station with the advice to stay off my face for a couple of days.

Just wait until next year, because I'll be back and then that tree will really be sorry. Come to think of it, so might the ski club...