

Mirroring Through Books and Relationships

By: Kristen Dantonio

At the beginning of the graduate school application process, I was eager to continue on with my professional learning. As an educator, I understand the perpetual need for learning and developing. It is important to show children that even adults continue to grow in their education. Children have this notion that as teachers, we know everything. While it is important to stay up with your craft of teaching and your knowledge of subject content, I think it is also imperative teachers show their students that learning is never ending. Pursuing a Master's of Arts in Education, has given me a platform to keep growing as a teacher.

While digging deeper into my growth throughout the graduate program, one of my goals was to establish a safe place for my students. I think this is crucial for their emotional, intellectual, physical, and social development. Creating a safe place in my classroom has allowed for many different things. Students are more prone to taking risks in the classroom within their learning, they seem to form happier and healthier relationships with their peers, their attitude toward school is more positive, and they are able to form a positive relationship with me. Through going through Michigan State University's MAED program, I have been given even more tools in building this secure environment. Choosing literacy as my focus in the program, I have developed in my literacy thinking and lesson planning. Many of my literacy courses have expressed the vital importance of book choices in the classroom. It is paramount to represent your students in the books that you share with them. When students see themselves in literature, they feel more valued in the classroom. This also gives them a self-to-text experience that may lead to a deeper appreciation for literacy. As I have gone through this graduate program, this is something that I have tried to directly implement in my own classroom. I have not only started to give more student choice in my literacy block, but I have also allowed for students to have the opportunity to share with their peers their own experiences while reading the book. The outcome is powerful. Students are so excited to share and to book up a new book to read. I will continue to improve on this goal and find even more ways to represent my students in literature.

Throughout the MAED program, I have grown in my teaching pedagogy. Although my goals have been developing, I will continue to meet my goals in creating a safe place for my students and providing representations of my class in the books that we read.