

A Credential to Come

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On the last night of our KIBH facilitator training in Oceanside, CA, at the QLN headquarters, Bobbi and Joe invited us all over to their home for dinner and social time. It was quite fun to see Bobbi in her home environment and I was still very much in awe of her accomplishments with the company and the teaching system she had pioneered. We were all relieved that KIBH was over. We had been under the microscope of skilled trainers who corrected us at each module that was presented. I remember clearly when we each had to take the main stage and present a segment from our curriculum. I was freaked out because of the major correction I had just received from Mark about my needing to decrease in importance so the kids could increase. I grabbed Jake and asked him what part he thought I should do, and with a little coaxing, I mounted the stage and did my scene. “OK, did you all see what just happened?” Mark shouted out to the other facilitators, thus stopping my speech. Everyone started shaking their heads in agreement. Yes, it was clear to everyone what error I had just made; it was clear to everyone except me. “Can you tell me now what happened?” I asked Mark who was standing in the back of the room. I was truly puzzled. “You were so nervous that you sped up your speech so it was hard to understand,” he replied. “Try it again.” And that was enough to pop my bubble of tension so I relaxed and got control of my presentation.

But now, that portion of training was over and we were all sitting around in Bobbi and Joe’s living room after dinner. Bobbi was sharing more of her journey through life that delivered her to this point in time. It was an amazing feeling being in the presence of Bobbi and all of

these other talented teachers. I remember saying to myself, “I guess I am teacher now, an instructor for real. Wow, this is cool.”

SuperCamp occupied my summers of 2011 and 2012. I was still making a living as a woodworker with my company, Mustard Tree Woodcraft, but loved to spend my summers teaching at youth events, which have varied over the years. That same year, Diantha once again found an interesting advertisement, this time for an educational company in Virginia known as Envision – National Youth Leadership Forum in Medicine (NYLF). Medicine had certainly been a favorite subject about which I knew much. They were looking for facilitators to teach their program to groups of teenagers. This sounded like much fun, combining my experience in medicine with my love of teaching teenagers. I applied for a summer position and was accepted as a Faculty Advisor for programs at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Our training was in Virginia, where we spent several days experiencing the content we would be instructing and preparing us to be knowledgeable in the sequence of the program. I applied again in 2014 and taught one session at UCLA and two sessions at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

During this period, God had me in a transition regarding employment. By the Fall of 2012, my health had taken a beating with the heavy labor of woodworking, many years of ear infections due to the fumes and dust, and finger joints that were rebelling from so much use during sanding and finishing processes. Having finger joints that wanted to stop working was a bit frightening. I was doing a lot of praying and talking to Diantha. We were convinced that the season for such strenuous work was ending, and God had plans to move me in another direction. After SuperCamp and NYLF, my appetite for teaching grew more intensely, but if I wanted to teach professionally, I needed a credential. Obtaining teaching credentials in California required

going back to graduate school, which meant thousands of dollars in tuition fees which we could not afford. Then I heard from Barbara Lyles, one of the former Community members, that the California State Universities had a program that might fund education for those 60 years-of-age and older. Indeed, when checking, it appeared the program was still available, so I set a course in my early 60s, to go back to school and earn my teaching credentials. That sounded crazy, but with the tuition program, it just might work. With much prayer and asking for God's intervention, my wife and I stepped forward in that direction. For 34 years, I had worked to support my wife and family, and now I was to quit earning money and become a full-time student again. My wife got a job as a hospice chaplain in San Diego, California, and began supporting both of us while I was in school. In the winter of 2012, I started taking prerequisite courses and exams, just to be able to apply for a graduate position at the School of Education, California State University, San Marcos. Before entering the program, I passed two California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), one in Biology and the other in General Science, required for middle school teachers.

It is an amazing feeling knowing that Jesus is guiding you and has a plan for your life. Going back to school felt like I had never left, and as I was going through my transcripts, preparing for the application process, I found a letter that had been completely forgotten. It was an acceptance letter dated 1973 from the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine, where I had done my undergraduate work. Though I don't remember making this application, it shows how consistent this desire to be a teacher had been in my heart.

The credential program started in the Fall of 2013, with concurrent on-campus classes and field clinical practice. My specialty track was secondary science, as my degree was a BS, Biological Sciences. My first clinical practice assignment was a seventh-grade general science

class. It turned out that my master teacher was in the middle of a family crisis, and had to take time off from teaching to resolve the issues, requiring a long-term substitute be hired in her place. I was then transferred to a ninth-grade Biology class at a local high school, but soon after it became evident that I was losing sight in my right eye. My retinologist diagnosed the problem as an epiretinal membrane, scar tissue forming over top of my retina, thus blocking my vision. I could not focus on the students in my classroom, which was a major source of frustration. In California, at that time, teacher candidates were to take three major state exams during clinical practice called Teacher Performance Assessments (TPA). Each of these online exams took a minimum of 24 hours of focused work spread out over several weeks. I was in the middle of the first of these three exams when my eyesight started to fade. I do not know what drove me so hard to complete this first exam, because it looked as if my potential teaching career was about to end. It seemed an impossibility to teach high schoolers with only one good eye, and the day came when, with one final click of the “submit” button, I finished my TPA1, walked out of the school library where I had been studying and told my master teacher and onsite university liaison that I had to quit the program. With the heavy weight of complete failure, I drove straight to the university to find my supervising professor and let her know of my departure, never expecting another opportunity to become a teacher. With sadness, she accepted my resignation from the program, but insisted that I talk to the Education Office to properly withdraw from each of my classes so they would not show up as “F” on my transcript. I did not know why she wanted to be so meticulous about my transcript, because I never expected to return to the university again.

I continued being seen by eye doctors, who eventually led me to the Shiley Eye Clinic, attached to the University of California, San Diego Health system. A surgeon from the clinic shared with us a new procedure that he was willing to perform on my right eye in an attempt to

correct the problem. Sure, what did I have to lose? Then he said I would have to be awake during the surgery to have volitional control over my eye movements. Whoa now! Wait a minute! That sounds painful and how will I ever remain still enough for him to do his work? I had no desire to have anyone poking around inside my eye and still be conscious of the procedure. He assured me that the anesthesiologist had a way to make that happen without it being a painfully frightening experience.

So, looking at this surgery as the only hope of regaining some vision, Diantha and I drove down to the clinic for surgery, trusting Jesus with the care of my eye and His hand with the surgical staff. I got dressed in a patient's gown and was rolled into the operating room. Everyone was most kind and supportive. My entire body was covered, including my head, with only the one eye exposed to the outside world. A nurse placed a fan under the covers to aid my breathing, for which I was most appreciative. The anesthesiologist worked his magic, both intravenously and topically. I could not feel any pain as they worked on my eye and was so relaxed, I was unable to move any part of my body, but was, nonetheless still "awake." I could hear the conversation in the operating room and could see fuzzy light through the eye, but that was all. They made three holes in my eye, one for a light, one for a suction and one for a surgical tool. The doctor needed to remove all the jelly-like vitreous from my eye, later to be replaced by saline. Then he got to the critical part. He said, "Martin, we're at that point where I need you to be absolutely still as I remove the scar tissue from your retina." He knew there was no way for me to respond, but that I was hearing everything. The next moment I was to hear words for rejoicing, "There it is," the doctor said, "it just popped off." Without any fuss or scraping, the scar tissue was removed cleanly, with no damage to my retina. That, I knew, was the hand of God in my life. The doctors were amazed at this success.

In the months that followed, as I recovered, I had two more surgeries, one for a cataract in the same eye, and a laser surgery to remove some excess tissue following replacement of my eye's lens. With corrective glasses, my vision was nearly completely restored. This process took the better part of a year, but by the Fall semester, I was back in grad school and heading toward my credential.

During the yearlong recovery period, I was so bored that I determined to do something constructive toward my career. Therefore, I studied and passed another six CSETs. So, by passing a total of eight CSETs, I earned four California secondary teaching credentials - Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Planetary Science, and Health Science.

Since clinical practice and classroom courses took place simultaneously, we were cautioned upon entering the program, not to have an outside job at the same time. This was wise counsel, because it seemed that every waking hour was filled with homework and projects for school. I am most grateful to God that I still had the capacity to study and write for long hours, a blessing I am still enjoying.

My first paying job was at Paloma Valley High School, in Menifee, Riverside County, California, teaching Biology and Forensic Science. The school had over 3000 students on campus and most of my classes were filled to a capacity of 36 students, with six periods per day. This was surely a trial by fire, but after that year I felt I could handle any size class. From year two onward, I have been at Bellevue Christian School (BCS) in Clyde Hill, Washington, just across a lake from Seattle. At BCS, I have had the time to develop my teaching and assessment skills, and the freedom from high stake standardized tests which dictate the curriculum. In fact, using the brain-based accelerated learning techniques from QLN, as well as an assessment system of personal creation, I have could teach my students much more, I think, than the scope

of the standardized tests, and had much fun together with my students in the process. I am aware of the burden that so many of my public-school colleagues suffer regarding standardized tests, and I do believe there are better and more productive ways to teach the curriculum and not drown the students in homework, which generally, does not advance student academic achievement. With that in mind, I will share some views and specific strategies I have used with students to advance their education to the top levels of Bloom's taxonomy, namely "analyze," "evaluate" and "create."