

Testimonial

Written by Monica Ignacio, One-year Graduate, 2017

Who would I be now had I given up on a dream?

Preparation for the exam became a daily goal of mine during the summer leading up to my Professional Year. On the day of the test I went into a panic, and even though I did prepare, I let my anxiety get the best of me; I had no confidence in myself or what I could achieve. I just knew from walking out of that first exam that I had failed, which was a horrible feeling. I found out what I hoped was not true, and then I enrolled in the math skills course to improve my mathematical understanding.

In the course, we learned about different math mindsets: fixed and growth mindsets. Our learning experiences are shaped in part by how we were taught, but are also formed by the beliefs we hold as individuals. For example, if we allow our failures and someone else's negative comments about us to define our abilities, and as a result, develop a fixed mindset, then we will never maximize our learning potential and reach our personal highest level of our achievement.

I worked on math questions often and would learn different strategies in class from my peers. Also, someone close to me took the time to help me truly understand the fundamentals of mathematics. They taught me to not memorize anything, but instead to take my time to truly understand what I was doing and why it was important. My math instructors, academic advisors and most importantly my friends and family each contributed to my perseverance. The most important thing I took away from the math skills course was to always maintain a growth mindset, where *yes* maybe I do have a hard time understanding some areas of mathematics, but my attitude will always determine my altitude; meaning, working hard for longer durations and making mistakes is another learning opportunity to grow as a mathematician.

When I failed the second time, I felt broken and it took me sometime to regain my confidence. When I saw my mark, I noticed my math had improved considerably, but I also felt disappointed about the mistakes I made that resulted in me not being able to graduate with my colleagues. Knowing what I know about life, we can either let our bad breaks destroy us or let them be our motivator to achieve our goals. Certainly, it is easier said than done; but, the more I opened my mind and looked at math as something I can do, the easier it became to enhance my math skills.

Preparation for the third attempt shaped my entire summer. I took the exam coordinator's tips and used every resource that I could get my hands on and self-taught myself every new concept. Saying that I did everything would be an understatement; I ordered the Singapore math books, I printed out every previous EQAO exam, and I looked up every kind of math question that I thought would be on the exam. I lived and breathed math. It was a combination of hard-work and perseverance through a challenging time that ultimately led to my success. It was well worth the dedication. The feeling of passing with a 93% on my third and final attempt was humbling.

My advice to any teacher candidate is to never give-up on your dreams because of a few bad outcomes. Seek help from your academic advisors and instructors because they are there to help you succeed. The most important thing to remember is that, it doesn't matter how long it takes for you to achieve your goals as long as you come to recognize that it is how we rise to a challenge that defines us. There are always going to be challenges, you are going to make mistakes, and it pretty much does not get any easier. However, living a life that brings happiness starts from within. Someone once said, "we teach best what we most need to learn," and now I am taking my math Additional Qualification to further my math teaching and learning. Like me, you can succeed if you just keep pushing forward.