

“There are patterns which emerge in one's life, circling and returning anew, an endless variation of a theme”

— Jacqueline Carey, *Kushiel's Chosen*

## MY CIRCULAR JOURNEY

*A Master's Degree, Geometry Classroom, and Outdoor Track*

by Rebecca Jackson

Many of my fondest high school memories take place on an outdoor track, with an inspiring teacher and coach, a perfect metaphor for reflecting on my goals. He found a way to motivate a group of teenage girls not only to perform their best for their team, but for their own personal sense of accomplishment. For me, it is clear how his influence led me to Michigan State for a graduate degree focusing on Mathematics, as well as Sports Leadership and Coaching.

When applying for the MAED program in September 2010 my goals were to find ways to motivate students in the classroom and athletes on the track. For my classroom I wanted to become re-energized with the latest research, ideas, and techniques. As a coach, hoped to learn more about the physical and emotional development of my athletes. Together, I hoped this would make me a more effective leader.

Today, it seems I have come full circle, with renewed interest in these same goals, but from a more knowledgeable perspective. Specifically in terms of staying up to date in terms of research, ideas, and techniques, I recognized the progress I have made, but also the neverending opportunity for growth and development. Throughout out various courses I have become proficient using Google Docs, Prezi, Wikispaces, and a variety of technology tools, but with each skill I master I am presented with a variety of additional resources. I have spent time analyzing NCTM's State Mathematics Standards and Practices, comparing them the Common Core State Standards and Practice, recognizing that this debate and discussion will never end.

Similarly, the knowledge I have gained in terms of athletic physiology, the responsibilities of a coach, the role psychosocial factors in athletics, and teaching techniques have only increased my desire for continual learning and growth in the development of my athletes. If anything, my time with Michigan State has emphasized the importance of setting and improving on my prior goals, as being a successful coach is much more than holding a stopwatch and running a practice.

Finally, leadership in mathematics teaching and coaching is still a primary goal. I have had the opportunity to share my mathematics work with other educators in my district and my coaching knowledge with others in our conference. Now, I hope to broaden this goal and use my knowledge and experience in a more universal leadership position. Perhaps I can present at a future conference, work with neighboring districts, or create an online platform for others' use.

It seems my journey began on a circular track in 2002, worked its way into a Geometry classroom in 2006, entered a Master's Program in 2010, and will continue well beyond my degree completion in 2014!