

Developing the Creative “I”

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Bringing it Together Final Paper

I do not view myself as a very creative person by nature. I am a middle school math teacher and that fits me well with the order and exactness of what mathematics involves. I have a tendency to view more artsy people as free thinkers and full of creativity. However, when teaching middle school math I have a strong urge to make math jump out to my students; to grab their interest, to make it exciting. This fits perfectly with Csikszentmihalyi's idea of cultivating curiosity and interest. I enjoyed this excerpt from the chapter *Enhancing Personal Creativity*: “Even though personal creativity may not lead to fame and fortune, it can do something that from the individual's point of view is even more vivid, more enjoyable, more rewarding” (p. 344). Throughout this semester I have explored the three processes of the acquisition of creative energy, identifying internal traits, and the application of creative energy. Through implementing intentional activities I established the goal of changing my thought on my personal creativity and creativity in general.

Initially I spent time exploring the idea of the acquisition of creative energy and how I can change things within my life to help foster creative outlets. I began this exploration by looking for and writing down something that surprises me every day. I loved this activity and the specific task of writing it down caused me to focus on some of the small joys of life that are overlooked. Teaching middle school students I begin to expect random conversations and thoughts each day in the classroom. Here is an example said by a seventh grade student: “If you pulled out someone's heart would it continue beating in your hand?” I could have ignored the comment or just brushed it aside, but this time I choose to let it surprise me. So I asked “Where did this question come from?” The response was very logical in the student's mind; “In Indiana Jones he held on to a heart and it continued beating and we were talking about the heart in science today so it made me think about it.” It amazes me the different connections that we are able to make each and every day. So many different ideas and concepts are able to fit into our brains at one time. The connections that these ideas have with one another allow students to continually gain knowledge and apply information they have learned. This one student statement reminded me of the amazing abilities our brains have and how the body all functions together.

Education is not only about the topic and contents being covered it is about allowing students to explore, express themselves, and be creative. When discussing the rule of multiplying by the reciprocal in order to divide fractions. One student goes “It's the flippin' rule!!” The entire class started laughing because she was so excited about renaming the rule, but for the rest of the period this is what it was called. We continued to use this name for the rest of the chapter. I am sure the students will be able to remember the flippin' rule easier than they would remember to multiply by the reciprocal. If it will help them remember the concepts, I welcome the creativity in my classroom what can it hurt.

Another part of trying to acquire creative energy was to develop some habits of strength. One of my passions is sports and being outdoors. A friend called and had tickets to a University of Miami Football game that started in a half hour. My first instinct was to hesitate, because it wasn't in my plan for that Saturday afternoon. I was just recovering from being very sick earlier in the week and having an allergic reaction to a lotion. The logical part of my brain and the planner in me began to take over. I had been sitting on the couch, drinking a cup of coffee and enjoying the calm Saturday morning that I was having. Did I want to give this up to go watch a football game out in the sun when I wasn't sure I was feeling one hundred percent? My friend interrupted my thought process by saying these are free tickets, you love watching football, you have never been to a University of Miami game, and you get to hang out with me. In the end I decided to attend, ran to shower and get ready as he was on his way to pick me up. We had a great time, the team won, I got to spend the afternoon enjoying the beautiful sunshine and my Saturday became more enjoyable than I had originally planned. This activity fit both of my passions; sports and being outdoors.

Also earlier this fall a group of teachers from school decided to do some canoeing in the canals around the neighborhood. We took one Saturday morning and spent a couple hours to talking and canoeing. Again the south Florida weather was beautiful.

Csikszentmihalyi states this: "when something strikes a spark of interest, follow it". This sparked my interest of kayaking in the everglades or different locations. I had always loved canoeing and kayaking in Michigan why had I not found places to do this in Florida. It also sparked my interest of wanting to learn how to Paddleboard. Both of these things I am looking into with my best friend who shares my passion of trying different outdoor activities. He actually has a couple kayaks so we are planning this winter to take the kayaks somewhere in the keys and spend a day just exploring and enjoying creation.

After spending this time exploring different aspects of my life and how to incorporate different activities and cultivate an interest for things I ventured into the idea of how internal traits impact creativity. Working on developing traits that I lack I begin thinking about the polarity of these certain traits and trying to develop them into more of a strength. One of my personality traits that I mentioned earlier is that I am a planner. I am able to adapt and adjust, but like to have a plan set before starting something. The polar opposite of this would be to not plan or change plans easily. Not that this has a lot to do with creativity, but creativity does require exploring and being open to different things. I enjoy change and adjustments in schedules when it benefits my own activities, but when it causes conflicts with my own activities I become frustrated and have a need to stick with the schedule. I think this shows some of how I feel about creativity. Creativity can be a scary idea so the pattern and order seems easier. Without creativity and accepting last minute invitations some of the greatest moments and exciting activities may be missed out on.

The place where I am most comfortable with change, no plans, and new experiences is in my teaching of PE and coaching basketball. I am comfortable in sports situations and settings. I can easily adjust to different things that are happening. For example Thursday during PE class, it was pouring rain from hurricane Sandy that was approaching and we were getting the wind and rain from the storm. This means all of our different grade levels of girls PE were using the gym together. One class period had

already been taught when I walked in to teach mine. The two other teachers were substitutes so I ran the class. It was different than planned due to the rain, but on the spot I come up with different fitness activities and relays to do with the girls. When talking to other people they have no idea how I come up with these different ideas so quickly, looking like the class period is planned. I am comfortable in that situation and it is something that I understand. I understand coaching and sports and different activities that help with fitness. This comes from my experience playing and going through different practices. It also comes from coaching PE for 6 years and working with different PE teachers and talking about different activities that have worked for them. My fear of no order or specific plans is not the same type of fear when it is incorporated into one of my passions. This is where I should be able to develop and explore more creatively.

Another aspect of looking at internal traits as stated by Csikszentmihalyi is to: "have new thought and new feelings about what we experience". I have internalized an idea that I am not creative. This grew from experiences in my childhood. When trying to pinpoint its origin I found that it stemmed from the comparisons I have made between my brother and myself. He received the artistic ability and the vocabulary, while I received the determination athletically and the logical brain. Over Thanksgiving it became very obvious that we still fill those same roles today. As a family we were playing catch phrase; the cousins against the adults. It was my brother's turn and he began describing his word in the only a way that we are used to hearing him describe things. His description is "A bulge in a muscle that is flexed" to describe the word strength. Needless to say, none of us were able to guess the word strength. My description would have consisted of something along the lines with lifting a lot of weight. I would then view his vocabulary and wording much more creative than my own. This continues creating the mental block I have that I am not creative. Other teachers have begun to tell me that they love the creative math projects I assign to my students. I need to take this as creative ability it just comes in an alternative way.

The exciting part now is to begin the application of creative energy and seeing how this changes my interactions and experiences. Csikszentmihalyi states, "Creative people are constantly surprised" (p. 363). Surprised by experiences and what people are capable of doing. This can be applied to being surprised by the different perspectives and outcomes for the same problem. I took a new coaching position at a different high school this; coaching the girls varsity basketball team. To begin with I was hired the day tryouts began so the season will be a learning experience for me and the players. We just had a tough loss on Friday night to a team we should have beaten. My athletes seemed to give up during the game, and the loss did not seem to impact some of them. In my previous coaching experience I had teams that struggled and lost in similar fashion, but they never gave up playing. I had to look at this situation from multiple viewpoints and perspectives. Perspective 1: did I prepare the team well enough to win this game or were we lacking the knowledge of something. Perspective 2: Do the players not like my coaching style or are upset that their playing time may be different than last year so they don't want to give the effort. Perspective 3: What were the previous habits of the team and how was the team run last year? I had to step away and look at it from what they were used to experiencing in previous years. This team was used to having a star player do all the work and now I was asking them to play as a team, to not be lazy and sit in a zone defense, but to play man defense all game, and to

work hard by pressing and fast breaking to tire the other team out. All of these ideas are a shock to them and brand new concepts. Thinking back on the first week of practice and my surprise when the team started clapping for me as I made a layup in a drill I was demonstrating. The previous coach did not run them through drills, didn't shoot the ball, and did not hold them responsible for some of the fundamentals that were important.

If I had not taken the time after this game to look at the situation from different perspectives and think about the possible different influences I would not have begun to realize how to reach my players. I would have been looking internally at what I was doing and not that they needed to be taught in a different way. Their expectations and habits needed to be broken down and built up with my expectations. Without this realization we would have not have had the break through practice we had on Saturday morning which lead to winning our next three games.

The other application I tried out was producing as many ideas as possible. Lately with my friends there has been a lot of "I don't know what to do" or the standard come on over and we will rent a movie and order a pizza. There is a place for this activity, but this same activity every single weekend limits the excitement of life. One of my friends brought up the topic of our winter break that we get this year at school. Here was a great opportunity to list as many different possible places to travel or different activities to do during these 5 days off. The list consisted of these ideas: Cruise to the Bahamas, rent a condo on Miami Beach, stay in the Keys, go snowboarding in Colorado, visit a friend that lives in L.A., go to New York and take in a Broadway show, go to Las Vegas, surprise our friends in Michigan by coming for a visit, or visit some of theme parks in Orlando. The amount of days we have off and the cost are usually the initial thoughts when planning something and will still lead to whether these ideas are plausible or not. However, listing them has opened up some more ideas of different things we could simply do in Florida. Living here can get you into a rut and forget about some of the amazing things that are right in our backyard. Some of these include: kayaking in the Everglades, snorkeling, taking a sunset boat tour, or learning to surf. It is fun to allow your mind to wander to all possibilities before worrying about the impossibility of something.

This exploration throughout the semester has impacted my professional life and my personal life. First off professionally I have realized that my teaching is greatly influenced by my personality traits and my need to be organized. These traits do not reach all students so it is necessary to allow free thinking, changing ideas, and different ways of exploring topics. This allows students to not only be able to foster their own creativity, but to see that I am willing to explore with them. There is no right and wrong way to be creative; everyone is creative in their own way. My goal is to continue looking for ways to allow creative thinking in my very systematic subject. Activities such as creating your own word problems, exploring ramps in relation to slope, and creating an online canvas full of sticky notes. I would like students to not be fearful of trying something different that may help them create a solid foundation of the mathematical concepts we are learning.

Personally I have been encouraged to get out of my comfort zone in both activities and friendships. I have begun to expand my friend circle to people that are willing to explore the outdoors and try new activities. Already planned for January I have a concert, and a reservation to try paddle boarding. Intentionally trying some of

Csikszentmihalyi's suggestions have helped me become aware again of the little joys in life and simply enjoying them when they happen; Things as simple as a smile, compliment, or a funny looking bug. I have also stopped worrying about what other people are always thinking about my life. If I find joy in the activity I want to let people see that I am enjoying myself, having a good time, and loving this life that I have been given. Creativity is something that we can do at all ages, these activities have allowed me to realize the joy of being creative and that creativity can come in a variety of shapes and sizes, there is no one specific trait that allows you to be creative.

November 26, 2012

I was interested in exploring the thought of producing as many ideas as possible. Parts of my life had been feeling as if the same activities and events were happening every week, so this idea seemed to offer some change. So I was thinking about this coming weekend however it is Thanksgiving and I am traveling to Michigan to see my family, so initially i didn't see an opportunity to try this out before the final paper. Then one of my friends brought up the topic of our winter break that we get this year at school in February. Here was a great opportunity to list as many different possible places to travel or different activities to do during these 5 days off. The list consisted of this: Cruise to the Bahamas, rent a condo on Miami Beach, stay in the Keys, go snowboarding in Colorado, visit a friend that lives in L.A., go to New York and take in a Broadway show, go to Las Vegas, surprise our friends in Michigan by coming for a visit, visit some of theme parks in Orlando.

In the days we have of break and the cost; some of these ideas may not be feasible at this time, but listing them have opened up some more ideas of different things we could simply do in Florida. Living here can get you into a rut and forget about some of the amazing things that are right in our backyard. Some of these include: kayaking in the Everglades, snorkeling, taking a sunset boat tour, or learning to surf. It is fun to allow your mind to wander to all possibilities before worrying about the impossibility of something.

November 18, 2012

Initially I viewed this activities as something that would be easy to find this week at least in the classroom. We are studying proportions right now and there are a variety of ways to set up problems involving proportions that I would allow students to write on the board their different ways of solving. Usually we would have about four different initial set-ups for the problem resulting in the same solution. As I continue to think about what Csikszentmihalyi meant by the statement "creative people are constantly surprised" (p. 263) what we were doing in class really wasn't that surprising. To the students it was a bit surprising because usually math problems are solving in one way. A different setup of an equation usually results in a different solution however these solutions were the same. The steps for solving the proportions result in the same operations happening so it is really not creative.

Friday I had a seventh grade student start rapping about solving proportions. This was more surprising. Previously I had played the students some math songs found on youtube about other concepts, so as we were working on homework he just started improvising a rap song about proportions to the tune of happy birthday. It wasn't the

greatest rap, but the students got enjoyment out of it and it was dealing with topics we were learning. When looking at creativity and how to incorporate in the classroom , interactions like this are important to have. It is necessary to allow students to have fun with material, to think outside the box, to be a little silly without getting in trouble for it. This is the play that we need to allow students to have.

My other goal was to look at this idea personally and come at problems from different aspects in my own life. I am a basketball coach and the season has just begun. I am coaching at a new school this year, so it has been a learning experience and will continue to be one. We just had a tough loss on Friday night to a team we should have beaten and my athletes seemed to give up during the game, and the loss did not seem to impact some of them. In my previous coaching experience I had teams that struggled and lost to teams we shouldn't have, but they never gave up playing. I had to look at this situation from a different perspective. Not from the perspective where I didn't prepare them enough, or that they didn't really like my coaching so stopped trying. I had to step away and look at it from what they were used to experiencing in previous years. This team was used to having a star player do all the work and now I was asking them to play as a team, to not be lazy and sit in a zone defense, but to play man defense all game, and to work hard by pressing and fast breaking to tire the other team out. All of these ideas are a shock to them and brand new concepts. It may not be that they are purposely trying to ignore what I am asking them to do, but in their minds they are so used to the other it is taking them time to fully understand what this new system is. With these thoughts I was able to plan a different type of practice yesterday, show the hard work and effort I wanted out of them and start making the necessary changes to improve the season. The athletes began to respond!

November 12, 2012

Now when thinking about the application of creative energy Csikszentmihalyi states, "Creative people are constantly surprised" (p. 363). This is an interesting statement to think about. I think in life and specially as teachers we always feel as if we need to be in the know. If we are to teach a subject to students there should not be a situation in which the students can shed light on the topic. However I think as we develop as teachers we understand that we may have a deep understanding of our topic, but our students can surprise us each day with tricks and ideas that they use to develop their understanding of the topic. There can be news ways of thinking about the topic that will offer light and understanding that we may have not been thinking about. I love working with middle school students because this happens on a daily basis. My students have wanted to come up with math raps for remember rules, have renamed rules so that were easier to remember, and have simply used different vocabulary in their heads that makes more sense to them. My mind may not work in exactly the same format as theirs and this should not be a bad thing, variety and creativity is good.

This week I plan to look at problems from as many viewpoints as possible. I think this can be applied to problems and situations in life, but then also to looking at solving math problems in a variety of ways. I plan to dive into both of these ideas this week and from a variety of perspectives.

October 28, 2012

I have stopped trying to view creativity as a means of artistic methods. Over the past few days I have looked back on some of the activities I have assigned to students in my Pre-Algebra classes over the course of the year and looked at their creative aspects. For one of these activities I had students create their own word problems using the topics over the last few chapters of study in class. Allowing students to create their own word problems required them to creatively thinking about applying the mathematical concepts we were learning in class to some of their own interests. I had gotten away from this activity because I felt that students needed too much instruction or guidance about the requirements.

After reading through many of the requirements with this course, I have changed my thinking about this assignment. Maybe it does not need to be an assignment that is graded strictly, but simply an activity where students are allowed the opportunity to explore their creativity within mathematics. I do not want to make it something where students are focussed on requirements and achieving a specific grade. I want them to explore different ways of presenting problems involved mathematical ideas. I am looking at trying this activity again this week allowing students to write their own problems and then exchanging them and solving in class. I want to look at it more as an activity where students can develop their creativity and not be graded or judged for it.

Personally, my creativity and non planning is coming out in my teaching of PE and coaching basketball. As I had mentioned before I am a very organized person and like to have things planned out. That is no different when coaching basketball, but when teaching PE it is something that I don't worry as much about. I have comfortable in sports situations and settings. I can easily adjust to different things that are happening. For example Thursday during PE class, it was pouring rain from hurricane Sandy that was approaching and we were getting the wind and rain from the the storm. This means all of our different grade levels of girls PE were using the gym together. One class period had already been taught when I walked in to teach mine. The two other teachers had been substituting all week so I had to take over and run the class. It was different than planned due to the rain, but on the spot I come up with different fitness activities and relays to do with the girls in PE. When talking to other people they have no idea how I come up with these different ideas so quickly and without the students thinking that I am just making things up. I am comfortable in that situation and it is something that I understand. I understand coaching and sports and different activities that help with fitness.

October 23, 2012

When looking at other internal traits Csikszentmihalyi states that we must "have new thought and new feelings about what we experience". To develop my creativity I need to fundamentally change my thought process of creativity. I have internalized an idea that I am not creative. This was built on from experiences in my childhood. When trying to determine where this internal trait has come from I found that most of it was built on comparisons that I have made between my brother and myself. I also looked at creativity to be mostly related to the arts and language. I do not have a lot of artistic ability so I do not feel creative when different activities were assigned in school dealing

with drawing or different artistic methods. I always tell people that my brother got those genes, I received more of the athletic genes in the family.

Secondly, I compared myself with my brother in relation to language and vocabulary. Both of us were good students throughout school, I worked extremely hard, he remember everything he read and heard. When writing papers and discussing different assignments while we were in school, my work was sufficient, thorough, but basic vocabulary. His papers contained more variety in vocabulary and his sentence structure was always something that I would have not thought about writing. I viewed this as a form of creativity of putting together thoughts and ideas. I would say that the sentence was confusing, he would argue with me, turn in the paper and be very successful.

From this couple ideas I have determined that I am not creative. Over the next few days I am trying to work on this idea and strive to view creativity in some different formats. The goal would be to change my thinking about what is actually creative and start viewing some of my activities and thoughts as being creative ideas.

October 17, 2012

I am by nature a planner and that seems to fit well with the fact that I enjoy mathematics and teach mathematics. The order and organization of the subject fits with the order and organization of my life. When thinking about my individual creativity, it always makes me nervous. I have a mentality that I am not creative. Colleagues have told me that I am creative with different projects and assignments I give my students, however I compare myself to other more free thinkers and do not feel confident in my creativity. Internally I want plans and organization not only in my teaching, but also in my activities and experiences of my life. When looking ahead I research different activities in the city, plan if the weekend will work and over think some of the timing and set up for these activities.

One example of this would be my workout schedule for this week. This coming Sunday I am running a 5K with some other friends. In preparation of this we have been working out together consistently since the start of the school year. This week we made a plan for tapering for the 5K on Sunday. So far this week 2 of the 3 days we have worked out together the plan has changed and internally that frustrates me. I mentally prepare myself for the workout planned and changing that throughout the day throws me off. Monday the change happened around lunchtime and we were planning on working out after school. This adjustment to the schedule wasn't extremely different, so I could adapt and adjust. Tuesday, everyone backed out of working out for the day and this was done at the last minute. I had scheduled my day around the workout and then heading to a friends house to watch a baseball game after. With this change I had waited around school to work out, then had no one to work out with. This caused my frustration level to increase. I was still able to do a workout on my own and feel great about it after.

Not that this life schedule has a lot to do with creativity, but it does have a lot to do with my personality. I enjoy change and adjustments in schedules when it benefits my own activities, when it cause conflicts with my own activities I become frustrated and have a need to stick with the schedule. I think this shows some of how I feel about creativity. Creativity can be a scary idea so the pattern and order seems easier. Without

creativity and accepting last minute invitations and changes some of the greatest and most fun activities may be missed out on.

October 14, 2012

To allow some more free thinking and less specific order in my class I assigned my Pre-Algebra students a new project. The goal of the project was for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of expressions and equations by the end of the unit of study. In an online canvas students can place sticky notes and import pictures and videos to a bulletin board. I tried to give the students very limited amount of requirements to allow their creativity to shine. What was interesting is that you can tell students are not given many open ended projects in school settings. I had many ask me, how many sticky notes do I need for each of the main topics in the unit of study. My response that I had planned out was, "there is no requirement. Use as many or as few sticky notes as you need to show me your full understanding of the concepts learned throughout this chapter." In response to this I got a lot of blank stares because the students did not know exactly what to do with this information. They are used to having specific guidelines to follow in math class and have not been simply asked to show what they know.

Many students had fun with the project because it was something different in math class. They did not simply have to solve problems with pencil and paper. However, the final results of the project did not yield as many creative ideas as I had hoped. Some students did a great job change colors, creating patterns, and importing cute videos describing some of the concepts. Others simply copied examples and definitions from the textbooks or notes we had taken in class. Just as I am trying to go through the process of being more creative and developing my creative eye, this is something that needs to be worked on with my students. They struggled a bit with this assignment because they have not been asked to use their creativity in math class. That is supposed to come out in art class. Allowing students the opportunity to get used to these types of projects and expectations will lead to some great creativity in the future if we can keep their interest. Also students need to feel comfortable exploring, knowing that their grades will not decrease if they do something different than their classmate.

October 9, 2012

Moving into the idea of internal traits and developing creativity, I have to look into some of my personality traits and ways to try and change and stretch myself to become more creative. I would like to work on developing what I lack. Thinking about the polarity of certain personality traits and trying to develop into more of a strength the opposite of what strengths or traits I currently have. When thinking along the lines of creativity; I am a math person which causes me to be very linear, organized, and like to follow a pattern. I need to work on developing more free thinking or freely organizing ideas. I believe this can help me better understand why some students have difficulty following the steps I give them for solving math problems. Also I would hope with trying to develop my own free thinking about activities and problems this could allow me to create different projects that students who may not be organized or linear thinkers can demonstrate their math knowledge. Over this week I am going to work on this trait.

September 30, 2012

Today with some friends we made a decision to try out a new restaurant in the city of Miami due to a promotional Miami Spice event. During the month of September you are able to dine at a variety of restaurant and more high class restaurants for a discounted price. There is a limited three course menu that you pick from. Just doing something like this and trying new foods is cultivation of curiosity and interest. The goal when going to lunch today was to order something that was unique and I had not eaten before. The variety of dishes at the restaurant offered this opportunity and in the end it was a delicious meal with some great company. The restaurant was in the Brickell area of downtown Miami which I have not had the opportunity or more likely haven't taken the opportunity to explore in the six years that I have been living down here. This afternoon being in that area sparked an interest of explore the area and the different opportunities and social events that it has. When reading the chapter from Csikszentmihalyi it mentions this: "when something strikes a spark of interest, follow it". So since an interest was sparked I should explore that area of Miami instead of sticking to the places and restaurants that I am comfortable going to.

September 26, 2012

Another part of trying to acquire creative energy was to develop some habits of strength. One of the suggestions in this category was to do more of what you love and less of what you hate. I think we always know what we enjoy doing more and these things we have more motivation for developing our skills and abilities. In teaching if we do not love our subject it is impossible to pass on that love to the students we interact with every day. One of my passions is sports and being outdoors. During the school year it is easy to get caught up in the everyday activity of teaching, grading, planning, and not spending the time being active or being outdoors. This past week I have had some last minute opportunities to do both of these loves. A friend called and had tickets to a University of Miami Football game that started in a half hour. My first instinct was to hesitate, because it wasn't in my plan for that Saturday afternoon. In the end I decided, how often does someone give you free tickets, you go and enjoy watching football and sitting out in the warm Florida sunshine. We had a great time, the team won and my Saturday began more enjoyable than I had originally planned. I do get the wonderful opportunity to teach physical education in the afternoons so everyday I get to change from classroom teaching to being outside. It is easy this time of the year in Florida to complain about the lingering humidity and frequent rain storms, but I realized as I stood sweating with my students that we still get to enjoy nature and get out of the classroom. My students were swimming and we were laughing as the girls tried not to get their hair wet, yet still swim the laps that I was asking them to swim. Overall, filling days with things you love allow me to explore and find joy in all the little things. To find joy in middle school girls attempting to keep their hair dry and the creative ways they were will to do this. One even brought swim caps...not realizing until one of the girls that is on the swim team told her those don't actually keep your hair dry.

When an activity is enjoyable creativity can be developed. You are willing to dive deeper into ideas, and ways to incorporate these things into other activities that may be less enjoyable.

September 18, 2012

A brief reflection about the week spent being surprised by something everyday. Over my brief teaching career I have noticed that some teachers get very rigid in their ways and very strict with the students. I remember my first year of teaching having veteran teachers tell me that I need to be really strict at the beginning of the year with the middle school students or their behavior would become really bad later in the year. Even one said she doesn't smile or have fun with the students for the first month. Being new I was unsure how to take this advice. First of all my personality does not suit this type of teaching so it was never something that I did. I have found instead of getting upset or irritated with off topic comments or questions that students make you need to embrace them, maybe even working them into a lesson. Education is not only about the topic and contents being covered it is about allowing students to explore, express themselves, and be creative!

Just today we were discussing the rule of multiplying by the reciprocal in order to divide fractions. One student goes "its the flippin' rule!!" The entire class started laughing because she was so excited about renaming the rule, but for the rest of the period this is what it was called. I am sure the students will be able to remember the flippin' rule easier than they would remember to multiply by the reciprocal. If it will help them remember the concepts, I welcome the creativity in my classroom!

September 16, 2012

To start off this semester I am exploring the acquisition of creative energy. I enjoyed this excerpt from the chapter *Enhancing Personal Creativity*: "Even though personal creativity may not lead to fame and fortune, it can do something that from the individual's point of view is even more vivid, more enjoyable, more rewarding." (p. 344) I do not view myself as a very creative person by nature. I am a middle school math teacher and that fits me well with the order and exactness of what mathematics involves. I have a tendency to view more artsy type of people and free thinkers and creative. However, when teaching middle school math I have a strong urge to make math jump out to my students; to grab their interest, to make it exciting. This fits perfectly with Csikszentmihalyi's idea of cultivating curiosity and interest. Over the past week I have been personally writing down something that has surprised my everyday. Working with middle school students mostly it has been something that a student has said in the classroom this week. The first day I started doing this was Monday September 10. In my second class of the day this question was asked by a 7th grade student. "If you pulled out someone's heart would it continue beating in your hand?" Not related to math, this was very surprising. The other thing that was surprising was that the student asked it in all seriousness. talking for a few minutes it came up that this question came from the fact that in the Indiana Jones movie the heart was beating in a character's hand. It amazes me the different connections that we are able to make each and everyday. So many different ideas and concepts are able to fit into our brains at one time. It is difficult to understand how it is possible to hold all those connections and information in one place. One other example from this past week was walking in Blockbuster this weekend to pick up a movie and seeing a person walking through the store with a small pet snake wrapped around their wrist. Surprisingly no one was saying

anything in the store almost making it seem like this was something normal you see everyday. People don't usually walk around stores with snakes on their wrists! Throughout this week I am noticing how specifically looking for things that surprise you creates a positive attitude and a love for the differences in life. Everyday should be enjoyable, with new things to learn and experience.