Kathy Coleiro shares her story as a RATEP Bamaga graduate and what a positive difference it has made to her life — and her students, family and community. Her career has spanned from teaching Indigenous Studies and the Arts from pre-Prep to Year 6 — all at Northern Peninsula Area College. Kathy is currently teaching Year 5.

How did this all begin for me?

While working at the primary school (Northern Peninsula Area State College) as a teacher aide, I was approached by my class teacher about the program and its benefits. Looking back, he had more faith in me than I did with myself at the time. However, with much consideration and support from my partner I decided to apply. Thankfully, I was accepted.

Gaining a Bachelor in Education has allowed me to understand and appreciate the effects (positive) teaching and learning has. It’s a wonderful thing when students smile and greet you, whether it be at school or in community. While it’s a challenging job, you can never say that you “know” how to teach because, in fact, you are constantly learning to be better and not to be better for yourself but, to be better as a teacher for your kids.

Studying through RATEP has allowed me to make new friends but, most importantly, feel valued that I’m doing something for not only myself but for my family, community and students. As a result, this is the most enjoyable part of my experience so far.

What advice would you give to those thinking about it?

In all honesty, I recommend this program to anyone willing to put in some hard work and perhaps sacrifice a thing or two in order to complete your studies. To achieve big you have to do big. Teaching is a life-changing experience for you, but mostly it’s the life-changing experience you create for your students. Sometimes you’ll feel as though you’re a second parent, but to see a child smile instead of cry is beautiful. How lucky are we to have this opportunity to be in our communities and be faces that they (students) can look up to and perhaps aspire to one day achieve, as you have.

Don’t think about it — go for it! I hope that someone in your community will encourage you to take this step. If not, let me be that person and let me tell you that you are more than capable, only if you try.

Good luck and I wish you all the best on your new adventure. Trust me, you won’t regret it.

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