

## **Lifelong Learning**

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I have spent the majority of my life in a classroom--sitting in front of a teacher's desk, or behind a computer screen, studying and making sense of all of the content thrown my way. Now I have the power of sitting on the other side, and the responsibility of teaching and positively impacting my students, the leaders of the future. Although this profession is very powerful, I am confident in my abilities to be successful. I am a lifelong learner dedicated to center my career around what is best for my students. This master's degree has equipped me with a range of knowledge, useful experiences, resources, contacts, and frameworks. I plan to focus on leadership, new technology, and supporting my students' needs in my future as an educator. These goals can all be tied to my students becoming independent learners equipped with the tools they need to be successful after high school.

As a younger teacher, some may believe that my classroom experience and expertise is limited. Although I am in my fourth year of teaching, I bring a different perspective to other teachers in my building. I am continuing to grow as a young leader within my school and this program has definitely helped build my confidence within my community. Not only have I gained a wealth of valuable information, I have been able to present in a variety of settings. I have presented at a Maker Faire, GREAT17, and COETC17, and online platforms including websites, blogs, and Twitter. As I push myself as a leader, I want to assist in guiding my colleagues to purposefully integrate technology in their classrooms. My role in special education is unique in the sense that I communicate with a range of staff members. By consistently reaching out to others in various subjects, I will be seen as a leader with resources to help them become better teachers. I plan to continue my online presence in order to reach not only the teachers within my building, but other professionals as well. Students will look up to me even more as they see colleagues coming to me and view me as a strong role model for them to aspire to be.

Technology is something that I have always had a passion for and I plan on exploring new tools for classroom use. I have enjoyed building my professional learning network online and in person throughout my time at Michigan State. I will use my new colleagues as resources and utilize my online presence through my professional websites and Twitter to reach out to others. I plan to seek out new professional development so I can continue to grow as an educator. One conference I would love to attend is the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning

(MACUL). This new technology will present my students unique new learning experiences that will advance their thinking and skills.

In the last four years of working with high school students with special needs, I have become familiar with the “digital divide.” Not all students have access to or own the same technology at home. With multiple teachers utilizing various programs and including technology into more assignments, many students become lost and fall further behind. In order to help support my students I have begun advocating for them with my colleagues to provide class time where students can complete the assignments. I want to discuss the purpose of the technology in the lesson and inform them of the TPACK (Technology Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) framework. Another way to help close the gap would be consistency across classrooms and teachers. I will seek appropriate staff to spark some changes and reduce confusion among students. Ultimately, I want what is best for my students. Sometimes learning may not need technology at all. There must be a healthy balance between no technology and using technology. New tools can be educational in addition to being fun and cool, but there is a time and place (Koehler, Mishra 2009).

After reflecting on my educational journey thus far, I am proud of what I have accomplished. I am optimistic when looking ahead to the future, although I know that there is a lot to achieve. Accomplishing these goals will not happen by the end of this school year, but I will continue to strive to reach them. I will utilize my professional community of educators and resources to help aid in my leadership, new technology, and supporting my students’ needs. I will embrace the challenge and take on the adventures that this beautiful profession has to offer.

Koehler, M.J., & Mishra, P. (2009). Too cool for school? No way! Learning and leading with technology. “Too Cool for School.”