

The Tales of a Lifelong Learner

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As soon as I figured out I was meant to be a teacher, I knew that this meant a lot more than just educating our youth. I knew that this meant long nights lesson planning, going back to school, and becoming part of a team of educators. It was not until I was about a semester into my master's program (Masters of Arts in Education - MAED), that I realized that I was truly made out to be a lifelong learner. I had known that I would be going back for another degree for pay-raise purposes, but it actually hit me: **I love to learn and am a lifelong learner.** Was the extra hours of studying, writing, and reading tough with a full time job? Yes. But it was, and still is, so worth it. I get to learn everyday alongside my students in the classroom, but also advance my own education to bring new knowledge back into the classroom for my students, their families, and my community at my school.

I understand that most people expect teachers to love to learn, but I am talking about this thirst for knowledge, the desire to continuously enhance the environment for my young learners, and to take me further in my career, is the type of lifelong learning that I have developed in obtaining my master's degree. In a few short weeks, I will transition out of being a student, and finally have my next degree. This thought daunts me, because I know of the desire I have to continue to learn. I know that I have the opportunity to learn alongside my coworkers, alongside my young kindergartners, but I still want more. Because of this, I have created three future goals to ensure that I continue to be the lifelong learner that I am. One of the first things I want to accomplish, is to **acquire my a Reading Endorsement.** The next goal is to work on my **second Master's in Technology Degree.** Finally, I would like to set a more personal goal to **deeply read the literature provided by my district** to perfect my skills in the area that my administrators are wanting me to. By setting these three goals for myself, it will help me to continue to be a lifelong learner, while enhancing my career both directly and indirectly with my students. These three goals are all different and do not necessarily relate to one another, besides the big picture of enhancing my education for my career. I chose these goals with life-long learning in mind, and to be as well rounded in that learning as possible. By selecting these three goals, I feel that I am working all angles of ways to gain new knowledge. I am perfecting my literacy skills with the desire to acquire a reading endorsement, I am learning new skills in my desire to obtain a second masters, and my final goal helps me to set my learning towards something smaller, being my district community. Although the goals do not tie themselves together nicely in a themed set of goals, I feel that I chose them for all the right reasons, and to make myself the best educator possible.

When I started my program in the fall of 2015, I knew I wanted to have a focus in literacy. Being a kindergarten teacher, **I am teaching the literacy foundations to all of my students every single day.** I realized partway through my program, that I could get different endorsements with different master's programs. Having done some research, I found that Michigan State University offers two graduate specializations in literacy and language instruction. The first is a reading endorsement, and the second is a reading specialist endorsement. Having either of these endorsements would enhance my literacy instruction for my young students, make me more marketable as a teacher, and could potentially open new doors for me if I wanted to shift out of being a classroom teacher. It

is important to me to be able to have the highest level of confidence to look at my student's parents and tell them that I am using all of my knowledge and skills to help their child in literacy, and I know that in the future, obtaining an endorsement make this possible.

Another topic I realized I wanted to learn more about while in the middle of my current program, is technology. We are in such a fast-paced technological world, and that is the direction where education is going. Being able to try out a technology class as an elective, I found myself captivated in the course. After attending the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL) Conference in March 2016, **I realized even more that I wanted to learn more about using technology in education.** With this realization, a future goal is to obtain a second Master's in Educational Technology through Michigan State University. It is my hope that with this second master's, I will have more technology tools to use in the classroom to better my future student's learning.

My final goal comes from wanting to grow within my current district (South Lyon Community Schools). My district has given the educators several texts use and implement at a building level. These books include topics covering Habits of Mind, Creating a Culture of Thinking, and the Art and Science of Teaching (Marzano Evaluation Plan). **I feel strongly about reading these texts closely in order to practice the skills in my daily teaching and planning.** There are so many times that I feel districts have given materials, and later brushing them aside, but in the three years that I have been in my district, these are the three materials that have lasted.

By setting these personal goals for myself, I am setting myself up for a future full of learning. There is nothing greater, but to exercise your mind, and be open to all the knowledge that this world has to offer. I hope to instill that same love of learning to my kindergarten students. I know that all of my goals take time, but as long as I have my sights set on them, with realistic expectations of completion, I know that I will have the success and be the lifelong learner that I want to be.