All Tied Together

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Starting in elementary school, I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I was the type of child who always wanted to be helpful and please my teacher. After coming home from school, I would set up a classroom in my house. Friends would come over and we would switch off being the teacher and students. Education has always been a passion of mine. I always worked my hardest to be successful and I cared deeply about learning and education. Attending Michigan State University and majoring in education was always a dream of mine. It came true when I got accepted to MSU in 2005. I couldn't wait to further my education. I loved my classes that involved spending time in the classroom. I looked forward to having my own classroom one day.

After completing my undergrad, I started my student teaching. I had the opportunity to student teacher in an amazing district. I student taught in a first grade classroom in Walled Lake, Michigan. Walled Lake is a district that had up to date curriculum and uses "best practices". I had a very rewarding and worthwhile internship year. While student teaching, I was required to take masters classes. It was very stressful and busy at the time but I am very thankful to have started earning masters credits. Having those six credits already earned pushed me and motivated me into continuing on with my masters quickly after graduation.

I wanted to get my first year of teaching under my belt before continuing on with my education. After completing my first year of teaching, I began looking into masters programs. I wasn't very sure what I wanted to focus on so I was talking to colleagues and researching what was out there. I was very interesting in joining an online program based on my schedule. I was talking to a few of my colleagues one day and learned that they both were part of the Educational Technology Masters Program at MSU. I talked to them about how they liked it and if they would recommend it. Both of them highly recommended the program. After talking to them, I also thought about how important technology is in the field of education. When I went on interviews for my first job, there was always a question about how I integrated technology into my teaching. I always had a few examples of ways that I used technology but I wanted and needed to learn more about technology. This made my decision easy. I was excited and ready to apply to the Educational Technology Masters Program!

 I applied to the program and was accepted. I was a little nervous about beginning the program because I didn't know what to expect. I knew that it was going to be tough to

juggle a full time job teaching and also the workload from a masters program. I decided that I was going to start the program out slowly and take one course at a time.   Before beginning the program, I thought of myself as fairly confident in using technology but I knew that there were tons of things I did not know or have experience with. I was eager to learn more about technology.

While teaching in South Lyon, I had a variety of technology available for me to use. My classroom is equipped with three student computers, an ELMO document camera, a projector, and an FM sound system.   There is also a computer lab to use at various times throughout the year. I couldn't wait to learn how to use these resources to the fullest potential to meet my student's needs. I wanted to learn how to use technology in interactive ways for my students. Beginning a masters program with a focus in Educational Technology was a way for me to accomplish this goal.

Just after beginning the program, I received a SmartBoard in my classroom and also an Ipad. This made me even more excited to continue learning about technology because I wanted to begin using these with my students right away. I knew that there was great potential but I didn't know where to start. I wanted to make sure I was using the technology in meaningful ways to extend and support student learning. I didn't want to use technology just to say that I use it in my classroom. I wanted to use technology to increase communicate with parents and also to differentiate my instruction in the classroom for my students will all different needs. My courses through MSU taught me how to do this effectively.

I quickly realized technology is continuing to grow and change. I knew that becoming a master in one technology would not be as helpful and beneficial as making myself familiar with a variety of technologies. Becoming familiar with strategies that can help you learn and use new technologies will help me more in the long run. This became my goal for the program.

In CEP 820, Teaching K12 Students Online, I created an online course for elementary students learning about addition. Before this course I never thought kindergarten and first grade students would be able to complete an online course. I was surprised when they were able to complete the online course. I like how this course allowed all students to create a project that was meaningful and would apply directly to their area of interest. This course allowed me to use many different aspects that I have learned from other courses. When creating an online course I was able to use my web design skills, TPACK, and teaching strategies. I was also able to explore and discover ways to engage students through an online course. I found videos, songs, and games to keep the students engaged in the course. This course probed to me that I could create an

online unit that can impact student learning, differentiate instruction, and still incorporate my teaching style and philosophy.

During CEP 811, Adapting Innovative Technology to Education, I learned how I could use limited resources to impact student learning and achievement. I was familiar with using PowerPoint to create presentations but in this course I used PowerPoint in a way that I have never used it before. I used PowerPoint to create an interactive lesson for first grade students. Before CEP 811, I was not aware of these features in PowerPoint. I liked being able to choose the topic I wanted to use to create the interactive lesson on. This allowed me to create a lesson that I actually could incorporate into my classroom and a lesson that fit into my curriculum. I selected the topic of fractions for this project. The lesson focused on the basic ideas of numerator, denominator and what both of those terms mean. I used this project in my first grade classroom to introduce, review, and reinforced the concept of fractions. I was also able to email the file home to parents for the children who needed extra practice. This course also allowed me to find Internet resources that were appropriate for the classroom setting. I was motivated to find ways that I could use the technology that I had available to me to support and engage my students. I continue to find useful resources on the Internet to engage students and support the curriculum that I am required to teach.

One aspect that I saw that reoccurred through each course in the program was working closely with other students in the class. Each class had discussion boards, assignments where we were required to leave feedback and suggestions, and replying to blog post. I found it very meaningful and helpful when reading responses from my classmates. In CEP 800, Learn, School, and Other Settings, we were required to create a blog. We had projects and assignments that we posted to our blog. Classmates would go onto our blog and comment on the post we created. This course got me very excited about following other teacher's blogs. I have found so many awesome resources that other teachers use in their classroom from reading their blogs. A key part of teaching is using your resources and working together. Following other people's blogs has helped me to find creative ideas to incorporate into my teaching.

My final course in the Educational Technology Masters Program is the CEP 807. This course allowed me to bring all of my work together and reflect on my accomplishments in the program. As a teacher, we are always taught how important reflection is for us and for our students. In order for teachers to better their teaching, teachers need to reflect on what is working, what can be changed, and what needs to happen moving forward from there. It is also important for students to reflect on their learning. They need to understand what they have accomplished, what they need more support on,

and where to go from where their learning is currently at.   Reflecting is something that I continually do subconsciously. After each lesson I teach I do a quick reflection. This course allowed me to look back and see what I have accomplished, view all the hard work I put into projects, and also think about where I will go from here. My "goals" essay helped me to think back on where I was at the beginning of the program and what I hoped that I would learn. I found that I accomplished many of my goals and also learned a ton more. The "Future as a Learner essay helped me to think about where I want to go now. It made me realize that my just because I have completed my masters program it is not the end of my education and learning. It helped me set goals for my future.   This course has also helped me to fine tune my web design skills. Creating an online portfolio gave me a deeper experience using Weebly. I enjoyed creating a portfolio to display all of my work.

The MAET program has helped me to find interactive and engaging ways to use technology in my classroom. It has opened my eyes to technology I didn't even know existed and it gave me a deeper understanding of technologies that I was familiar with. I have enjoyed trying out technologies in my classroom and finding out how I can incorporate them into my curriculum. This program has also helped me to become a leader in my school. I have been able to show what I have learned to colleagues at my grade level and in my school. Teachers have commented on how they want to be able to use technology in the ways that I have. It is exciting to be able to share my knowledge and experience to help other teachers use technology in their classrooms.   I want to continue to grow in my knowledge and inspire and lead teachers in ways to use technology in their teaching.

I am very happy that I listened to the recommendations from my colleagues. I think that the MAET program was the correct program for me. If I ever have anyone who asks me about masters programs, I will discuss with them all the great things that I learned about technology and how to use it in my classroom to support, engage, and extend student learning. I am excited to continue to learn about new technology and incorporate it in to my teaching.