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Oh the Thinks You Can Think!

“Who dares to teach must never cease to learn.” ~John Cotton Dana

Learning is defined as, “The acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience, practice, or study, or by being taught.” I agree with this simple definition of learning but think it also goes beyond that. Continuing to learn means being open to new ideas and challenges. It means having the desire to grow in aspects related to our knowledge and understanding of our expertise. It also means questioning the way we think and the way we apply the things that we know. I find the quote by Dr. Seuss, “Oh the thinks you can think if only you try!” to speak volumes to me as a teacher and learner. If we take the time and make the effort to learn new things and think about things in a new light, we will open up our minds to more opportunities, new ideas, and new ways of thinking about things. And who knows what we can think up, with a mind set like that.

To consider myself a lifelong learner, I consciously need to make it a priority. And since technology is changing at such an incredibly rapid rate, I find it absolutely necessary to continue to learn and stay connected with the news, developments, and headways that are made in the education and technology fields. To grow as an educator, I plan on attending professional development workshops as well as work and communicate with colleagues about the happenings in our field. I also plan to use my Netvibes page as a great resource for staying connected. I found some very insightful news feeds to subscribe to including: Free Technology for Teachers, Elearnspace, BlogBoard, NPR Education, Tech & Learning, The Teacher’s Podcast, and Education Week. Checking my Netvibes on a regular basis will give me the opportunity to increase my repertoire of technology resources, communicate with other educators on relevant educational issues, and acquire new teaching techniques and strategies. I also plan to read educational technology journals, including THE Journal and ISTE, as well as blogs to stay on the cutting edge of new advances related to the teaching world. My plan also includes making the time to read relevant research papers with a critical eye. I want to take into account all the factors present during the research so that I can learn from those experiences. I will critique and validate the points that are being made and evaluate what I can take away and apply to my teaching.

I have gained a plethora of knowledge and skills in terms of my ability to incorporate technology effectively in the classroom but, of course, there is always room for growth. My learning stems from my coursework at MSU as well as from the trial and error time spent in the classroom working with technologies first hand. I find myself to be one that learns best by either using built-in tutorial help or by working with someone one-on-one. I also have learned that taking small steps in understanding is part of the journey when learning to be competent in

using new technologies. Even though it can be frustrating at times, I find learning and experimenting with these technologies to be exciting and worthwhile. The opportunities and creative ideas that can develop in the classroom when using a technology in an appropriate and thoughtful way are extraordinary. Students seem instantly engaged and motivated by technologies and they want and need to know how to effectively use, communicate, and work in this technological age. Technology is everywhere and we seem to have the answers to so many questions at our fingertips. However, as an educator, it is my responsibility to incorporate these technologies in a thoughtful and effective way that first considers the pedagogical strategies and the learning outcomes that will take place.

As my Master's program comes to close, I can't help but feel that this is not the end but more of a new beginning. I have grown so much as an educator and learner through this program and I definitely have a different outlook and approach to so many aspects of teaching with technology and being a leader in this field. I feel well equipped and confident to move forward with my career because I have a solid foundation of knowledge, experience, and resources to fall back on. I had always picture myself as a classroom teacher and didn't think about going beyond that or taking a different path. Now, I see myself ready and eager to try new things and experience different aspects of the teaching profession to make myself more well rounded and marketable in my career field. I see myself as a leader in technology within the school or district that I join, if I choose to take that path. I also have the desire to either become an education consultant or adjunct teacher at a community college. Being an education consultant would allow my to teach other educators while continuing to learn from others and be on the cusp of working with new technologies. Being an adjunct teacher at the college level would be such a wonderful opportunity for me. I would get to share my knowledge with students who are eager to enter the education field while also learning from them through their new ideas that they are striving for with technology in the classroom.

I know that in whatever path I take, it is crucial to be relevant and connected with the happenings in society and provide teaching experiences that apply to my students' lives. It is also imperative to connect with students; making sure they know that they are my top priority and that I value their opinions and dedication.

Teaching is my calling. It is a true passion of mine. I am always striving to be better. As Albert Einstein so eloquently stated, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." I also think of William Arthur Ward's words, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." To inspire and make difference one has to be willing to learn from others and be hungry to learn and grow from life's experiences and challenges.

I know that teaching and learning go hand in hand, so being a lifelong learner who is well versed and well read will greatly define the impact that I have on the lives of my students.

