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2.17.13

In Retrospect

Back in the winter of 2008, I found myself applying for Michigan State's MAET program. When I wrote my goal statement for this Masters program, I had just completed National Boards Certification and was at an exciting time in my career. I felt like a confident, effective teacher with the experience and professional development to back it up. I was teaching 3rd grade at a California Distinguished school in Malibu and loved my job as well as my exceptional students. I lived in Santa Monica with my husband and was content with my professional life. Fast-forward 5 years later and my life paints a very different picture. I am now the mother of two beautiful girls and I have the privilege of staying home with them right now. I live in Royal Oak, Michigan and now spend my days nurturing and teaching my kids instead of an entire classroom of students. Even though I presently stay home, I am still passionate about the education field and know that I will be back in the classroom when the time is right. My life has drastically changed in the last 5 years but the changes have enabled me to experience the greatest gift I could ask for; motherhood. With that said, when reflecting on the last five years and my initial goals, I found the changes to be quite parallel. My life has changed. My goals have changed. And both will continue to change as the years go by. BUT the change is a natural occurrence since the changes are because of growth from knowledge gained through life experiences.

From this Masters program, I had hoped to become proficient in the latest and most innovative programs that are relevant to the teaching world. I also wanted to be on the cutting edge of technological advancements so that I could keep my classroom as rich and challenging as possible. I wanted to keep my students stimulated in learning via technology, as it is a product of their generation.

I assumed that I could learn and become proficient in this area just by completing this program. I know understand the depth of this goal and the importance of staying committed to staying connected with the new happenings in the educational, technological world. Staying on the cutting edge means continuing to learn, explore, and stay attuned to the advancements that continue to take place in this field.

Technology advances are happening at such an incredible pace and this generation is growing up experiencing things with a “touch, swipe, or pinch” mind set in this age of technology. Children are absorbed and immersed in technology from such a young age that it has become crucial to understand the best ways to incorporate these technologies into the classroom. Students seem more inclined and interested in learning when technology is involved. I assumed that if I learned how to use all these new, fancy technologies my classroom would instantly be more successful and innovative. Through these courses I have altered my goal to be more relevant and effective. It’s not just about being able to use the technologies but how to best use the technologies to be an effective teacher. I need to ask myself, “How can the technology enhance the learning that I want to take place?” First and foremost, I think of the pedagogy when designing a course

or a lesson and then consider the technologies that will aid in improving the learning outcomes. How can I improve their understanding and their ability to apply their knowledge to aspects of their life? I have learned to not get caught up in the “bells and whistles” but to effectively incorporate technology when it serves a purpose and enhances the learning that is taking place.

I also aspired to be a technology leader at my school. I wanted to lead by example and use the knowledge that I gained to educate my students in the most innovative way. I wanted to collaborate with colleagues to make improvements in our skills in terms of teaching with technology. This goal has altered in the sense of looking at it in a broader capacity. I now see myself educating other teachers, designing educational apps, or teaching educational technology courses in the future. I also have come to understand that being well versed in recent educational technology research and learning about theories and trends are crucial elements to being a well-rounded educator and leader. Being able to critically evaluate research studies as well as conduct effective research studies of my own is a goal that means more to me now. After being engaged in this type of learning, I have seen, first hand, how informative and eye opening it can be. Now I see research as a learning tool that is needed when taking on a leadership role in the teaching community.

I consider the teaching profession to be a profoundly important job and I take it very seriously. I believe it is important, as an educator, to continue learning and advancing my knowledge so that I can make the most positive impact I can on my

students. I want to guide and teach them the skills they need to be successful later in life. I love being a part of advancing their minds and shaping their lives for the better. These are goals that will never change. And why would they? To me, as an educator, making a difference is what its all about.