

Constant Change

The world is ever changing. Each year that passes brings new experiences and new opportunities. I remember having dreams and expectations when I was a little girl, when I would get married, what my career would be and how many children I would have. Every year brought a new home, a new school, and new friends. Change and choices became scary. Once I graduated from high school my dreams were no longer about the family I could make but about what I wanted to do for myself. College allowed me opportunity to explore and challenge my knowledge without feeling stupid. My undergraduate program strengthened my sense that I was going to be a successful mathematics teacher. Then a road presented itself, to teach or further my education. I chose to have my own classroom. What I did not expect was that even though I was the teacher, I would never stop being a student. After four years, another major change happened; I got married and started my family. It was at this point I felt it was time to continue my education because just as the world changes so must I. Returning to school was challenging enough let alone thinking about not wanting to waste time and energy on knowledge I already knew. It was then I decided to learn what I wanted to know not what a degree told me I had to learn.

Michigan State University offered me an opportunity in their Master of Arts in Education that I never saw in any other degree program. And it became so much more than what I had hoped for. This program allowed me to explore learning opportunities to what I wanted to learn. I was able to continue learning about teaching mathematics but also begin to move forward in becoming a leader. What I was not expecting was that in my journey I would become more confident to bring technology into my classroom and allow students to use create evidence of their understanding through different technologies. One idea that I will walk away with is that though I lack ability to manipulate technology easily, if I give it time and explore it, not only will it be beneficial to me but I will give my students new opportunities to learn new knowledge. I understand that I am learning some of these new ideas and devices for the first time but my students have grown up with these and some

do not know how to properly use them either. Now, I get to learn new things and expand not only their understanding of mathematics but their use of new technologies. Another thing I learned was how influential I could be. I knew I wanted to keep learning and that I had the skills, the desire to be a lifelong learner but as my education continued through this program, I changed focus and started to ask myself how I could get my students to do the same and how could I get my colleagues to change what they have done for years. I got my hands on books that inspired me be okay with the fact that my students might not leave my classroom knowing math, as long as they left my classroom with new strategies to learn how to learn, explore, and get any question they had answered. With constant change and growth, my student need to know how to adjust so maybe it is more important to know how to find new information or on how to do a problem than to actually know how to do every problem. (No one can know the answer to every problem). Finally, I gained confidence in my ability to be a leader not only in my classroom but within a whole school. I was able to review what I do in my classroom, make minor changes, and then have the desire to encourage and support others around me with my knowledge. Everything I have learned about a professional learning community has allowed me this year to help my school recover from a 50% turn-over and allowed my math team to support each other in our journey. I am happy to say that my administration can count on my support of the effectiveness of a Professional Learning Community.

As I look back to highlight certain courses, I find it difficult to focus one course when the importance of what I learned overlapped in two. I want to acknowledge those courses that have helped me develop my skills in technology, as a leader, and as a promoter of lifelong learning.

The two courses that really impacted my education in the technology that I could bring into my classroom was CEP 800 Psychology of Learning in Schools and Other Settings and TE 861c Teaching School Subject Matter with Technology. The truth is I wanted to take CEP 800 because it was a psychology class but it turned out to be so much more. This was the first class that I was able to create a vodcast and a digital movie, and I struggled. Even though my work could be "tighter" I am proud of how I could develop analysis through visual and verbal recordings. During the semester that I took CEP

800, I was concentrating on my learning of technology but it was during TE 861 c Teaching School Subject Matter with Technology, that I could consider how I could bring digital movies into my classroom. I was able to develop a review video of a concept on transformations that my students instantly used to study for their assessment. I realized the benefits and how little effort I could put in to create lessons online. It has always been crazy to me that students do not take advantage of the internet but when I offered a video I created myself, students looked it up immediately. I hope to continue to bring my lessons to the screen while allowing students to show their learning through their own digital movies. It is because of these two classes that I allow my students to show their understanding by creating their own teaching methods of a concept. My students have been able to learn new technology while creatively justifying their learning. Technology is now and will be the future; it would be a disservice to my students.

While increasing my technology skills, I was able to develop stronger and more organized leadership skills through EAD 801 Leadership and Organizational Development and EAD 824 Leading Teacher Learning. Professor Nancy Colflesh has inspired me to pursue leading a school, if not, to have a voice in the future of my school. These classes have given me the confidence to embrace my role as head of the 9th grade and math department. I can respectfully lead my team in becoming a Professional Learning Community. Through these classes, Nancy has given me skills and ideas to present to my leadership team. Sometimes there are so many great ideas to incorporate but I now know that success takes time and steps. My school struggles with turn over, but with effective leadership it could only be a small step backward and push large step forward. EAD 801 and EAD 824 have been two courses that have opened my eyes to becoming an administrator. I had the chance to put myself into a position of leading a school and to find what I thought was important. When I got my comments back on my year proposal, I was in awe that it was one of the best she had ever seen. I always had a passion for teaching and it is difficult to picture myself out of the classroom, but Professor Nancy Colflesh has entertain me with the benefits I can give a school if my ideas held high in the decision making. If I had the chance to take more classes from Professor Colflesh, I would not hesitate whatever the class was.

The final idea that I am walking away with from my Masters of Art in Education is what it means to be a lifelong Learner. Reality sat in during ED 800 Concepts in Education Inquiry that if I want to be an effective teacher I have to continue learning, even up to the day I retire. During EAD 860 Concepts of a Learning Society, I realized that I needed to support my students to become a lifelong learner and by giving them these skills, I would be guaranteeing their success. In these classes, *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, by Vivian Paley and *What the Best College Students Do*, by Ken Bain, are two books that I will reread every year and pass on to my colleagues. Paley showed me how journaling can be so powerful in decision making. And Bain showed me that we succeed more when our passion of knowledge overcomes the grade of what we learned. Students always get upset that they did not receive an A, yet I ask "Do you know what you did wrong? Do you understand the concept?" and when the answer is yes, I am satisfied, I just wish they would be proud of their learning instead of their grade. It is still a struggle to convince students that they have multiple opportunities at their fingertips and it astounds me that they do not take advantage of what they could have. It is my job to continue to try to get student to understand the importance of finding knowledge, whatever it may be, and continue to expand their minds. Lifelong learners will succeed in the world, if not, be emotionally satisfied with themselves and I hope to get my students to desire the knowledge, not the grade.

I am proud of my success and findings through my program but even more elated with being able to reflect on my experience in ED 870 Capstone Seminar. I have enjoyed sharing my journey with my instructors and the Capstone Seminar "hits the hammer on the head" when showing the impact the Master's Program has on a student. If there was not point to reflect or enjoyment in it, then why put time into the program. This last class puts a wrapping around this wonderful journey that will continue passed these words.

The world is changing and I would not be doing my job if I did not continue to change with it. Michigan State University gave me an opportunity to grow as a student, a teacher, and a leader. I am proud to call myself a

Spartan and continue promoting growth to my students and colleagues.