

Looking Back to Look Forward

People go into education for different reasons, but there is likely one thing we all have in common: we cherish learning. Although I am a teacher, I will always consider myself a student as well. When applying for the Masters of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) program at Michigan State, I had a strong desire to continue my education both for myself and my students. Due to recent world events and the sudden switch to online learning, I now feel this passion more than ever.

I had three main goals listed in my application to the MAET program:

1. Learn the best practices of integrating technology to support critical thinking and the overall learning process.
2. Stay up to date on the latest technologies.
3. Continue my journey as a lifelong learner.

Now in my final semester of the MAET program, I can say that I feel that I have not only accomplished the goals I set for myself, but I've learned so much more. Going into a program with "technology" in the title, I imagined I would be focusing a lot on devices and how to get first graders to learn through using them. I had no idea how true this would become as the country has shifted to online learning. My courses helped prepare me for this change not only by teaching me how to integrate technology in my own class, but more so in teaching me how to learn using technology. This helped prepare me to step into my students' shoes as I was preparing virtual lessons. I feel that I had an upper hand in being prepared and comfortable teaching online compared to many teachers at my school who had to attend countless training sessions on how to use many tools I have already been using throughout my courses. I feel immensely grateful for this.

Perhaps the most important thing I've taken away from my experience in the program is that technology doesn't necessarily mean devices. Technology means innovation, iteration, creativity, making, and so much more. I feel strongly about teaching my students to think critically so that they are prepared to enter our ever-changing world as prepared and empowered as they can be. My courses have nourished this feeling and given me more resources than I realized were out there. I have never felt more empowered, myself, to encourage my students to push boundaries, question, and explore than I feel now as I finish up my MAET journey.

So, as I prepare to teach my first graders in the fall - whether that be virtually or in person - I am confident that my original goals have set me up to be successful in that endeavor. Although my time as an MAET student is coming to a close, my goals have

never been more important. I feel so lucky to have been more prepared to teach virtually than others because of what I have learned throughout my courses. Because of this, I see these goals of mine as never truly being “met” but being ongoing for the rest of my career.