

All Good Things Must Come to an End

I believe in lifelong learning, and I have always known I wanted to continue my learning through a Master's degree. When deciding on program, I wanted to focus on something that is meaningful to me and that I am passionate about. I have wanted to include more technology in my classroom and I believe that technology is the future of education. Throughout my experience in the Master's of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET), I have learned more than I would have ever expected. Not only did I learn about educational technology, but more importantly I learned about how to incorporate the technology into my classroom. In each course I found ways to tie the content into my classroom. All of the major assignments were designed to be implemented or add value to our classrooms. I completely believe that the crossover between my courses and classroom allowed me to successfully complete my assignments and motivated me to use what I was learning in my classroom.

This program took no time throwing us into the technology. In my first courses I was using technology to learn a new skill and writing conference proposal to discuss technology in the classroom. We became creators using technology to create new ways of learning or expressing information. I found ways for students to showcase their work from Mozilla Popcorn, to Prezi or even creating their own website to showcase what they have accomplished. Students are motivated to do well when technology is involved. They will be using technology for the rest of their lives in their careers and education. I was able to find ways to incorporate technology into my classroom that students will be able

to use for years to come.

The most meaningful thing I took away from the MAET program was the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. From early on in the program, we were introduced to TPACK. Each course had a section with TPACK and we practiced using it in our classroom. Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler created the TPACK framework. TPACK is the connection between three types of knowledge: Content, Pedagogy, and Technology. The importance of TPACK goes past the knowledge in these areas separately. TPACK sees these three knowledge areas interwoven and working together. Effective technology implementation involves connecting all three of these knowledges in a way that works best for the specific teacher, class, grade level, content area and students. Each class will look differently.

In each course, I was able to practice using TPACK in my classroom. I experienced first-hand how this framework can make lessons effective and focused on student achievement. When creating lesson plans before I never thought about how technology and content should interact, or how the technology will affect or work with my pedagogy strategies. Once I started questioning my lesson plans and creating them with the TPACK framework in mind, I was creating effective and strong lesson plans. Overall, learning about TPACK has changed my way of lesson planning and thinking about teaching. I would love to share this framework with my colleagues at work. I think using this in the classroom is something that would benefit every teacher, and in turn benefit every student.

One of the meaningful classes I took was “Teaching Students Online” (CEP 820). In this course we were able to practice creating an online course. I centered it around a class I teach every year, Algebra. Throughout the course we worked with peers and instructors to improve our sites. I learned how to create an online website, while keeping in mind the online classroom standards. I was able to play around with different content management systems until I found one that I thought would fit my classroom the best. I was also able to devote time trying different strategies for online learning and different formats. Through feedback from peers and instructors I was able to construct an online learning environment for my students to learn and understand Algebra. Through this course I was able to dedicate time to creating an online learning environment. The course gave me the tools and resources to confidently and successfully creating an online learning experience for my students. Since this class has ended I have continued to work on my online course and I have been using it in my classroom.

I constructed an online classroom for my Algebra course. I created the first unit I teach using a flipped classroom method. The students watch a video of the lecture on the course website that I previously recorded for homework. They then come to class with questions over the notes and then we work on practice problems together where I can provide one-on-one help. I want to take what I have already created and add to it. This method of teaching was a huge success with my students. Through this course I was only about to work on the first unit in the curriculum and have since had to go back to the traditional lecture in class

method. I want to put all of my units of study on this course website I created and use the flipped classroom method. Once I complete my Master's Program this will be my main focus with any extra time I have.

Students need to have a choice in the ways they learn and how they display what they know. Through this course I found ways to give students more choices through the use of an online classroom. One of the most important things I learned from this class was the fact that online classrooms continually change and evolve. Once I am able to convert my entire curriculum to a flipped classroom approach I will be able to make improvements to each unit and section as needed. I will continue to make changes as my classes change year-to-year and as new technology becomes available.

Another course that has impacted my teaching significantly is "Learning Math with Technology" (CEP 805). This course was one of the reasons I decided to get my Master's degree from Michigan State in Educational Technology. Finding new ways to include technology into the classroom is usually not that difficult, the possibilities are endless. I have found it very difficult to incorporate technology in the math setting in a meaningful way. There are a variety of review games or practice activities available, but I was not sure if those activities were useful to student achievement. In this course I was able to work with other high school math educators. We were able to discuss concepts in math technology and a variety of tools available for the classroom. The interaction and collaboration with my peers allowed me to see new viewpoints and experiences that I have never had.

This course also allowed me to research different tools to help teach math. We looked at math standards from the National Council of Teachers of Math, and Common Core State Standards. While exploring new technology, we kept these math standards in mind. Knowing the standards allowed effectively evaluate technology on: whether the technology fit into the curriculum I currently teach, and if the technology would be valuable to the students and the class.

I was able to create a technology toolkit for my classroom and for other teachers. I researched a variety of online tools to use in the classroom. I found tools to teach new concepts, review old concepts, and practice current concepts. The toolkit is an easy way to display technologies that are useful in the classroom. I have accessed the toolkit multiple times throughout the year and I have been able to add to it as I learn more about technology in the math setting.

“Approaches to Educational Research” (CEP 822) is another course that has impacted me a lot. Although this was definitely one of my hardest classes, I learned a lot about research. I have never looked into research much, and have never completed educational research myself. I think that learning about the research process made it easier for me to understand research articles. It is important to understand the research process to be able to understand what the researchers are trying to convey or find out.

Not only was I able to learn more about the research process and displaying data, but also I was able to complete research on a topic that interested me. This project gave me an opportunity to extend my thinking and knowledge. I was able to learn more about the research process through hands-

on experience in conducting my own educational research. Throughout the course the instructor continually reminded us that we were not going to actually conduct the research, we were just creating a plan. This made the project more difficult for me. I wish I had been able to conduct the research and find out what my results would be.

As a special education teacher, I have noticed a lot of my students lack organizational and study skills necessary to succeed in the high school setting. When students come to us they are expected to know how to organize themselves and study for upcoming assessments. Through my research I found a lot of information about the importance of teaching students these skills. I created a research plan that focused on the effect of direct instruction of organizational and study strategies using technology to the success of students in 9th grade. When creating this plan I continually thought about my students. Once I am done with my master's program, and have some extra time, I would love to conduct this research plan I created and see what results I would find.

Through all my course work in the Master's of Arts in Educational Technology program at Michigan State University I have learned that I am able to effectively incorporate technology into my teaching and classroom. Technology is constantly changing; therefore my classroom and teaching will be forever changing. All of my courses have taught me new things, and have impacted my teaching and classroom for the better in multiple ways. I hope from here, I can continue to learn about technology in education. I have become confident in my

technology skills, and I am eager to become a leader in technology in my school district.

I no longer think about including technology into my classroom as a burden. Incorporating technology into my classroom excites me and I continually strive to find more ways to include it. This program taught me the importance of including technology in education, the positive effect technology can have on student success and motivation, and how technology can help prepare students for their future after high school. Students in today's classrooms learn differently than students did 20 years ago. This means that our teaching styles and classroom environments must change to fit our students. Lectures and sitting behind desks with pencils in hand, only speaking when asked a question, no longer work for our students. Students in the classrooms must be actively engaged in the lesson. Knowing all that, how could I not be motivated to make each class a 21st century learning environment with technology at the center?